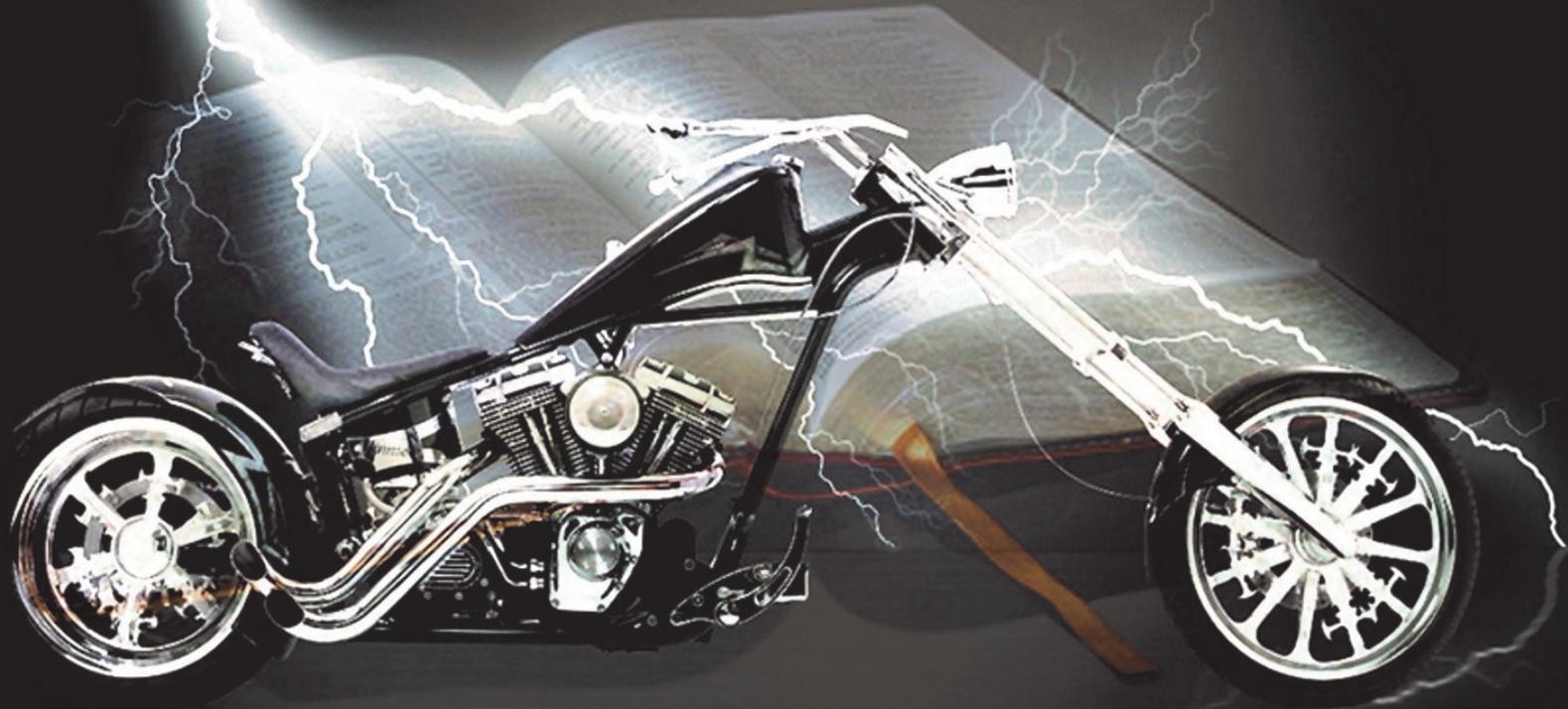


Full Throttle Discipleship



FULL THROTTLE STAGE—ONE MANUAL

This Manual Belongs to:



VICTORY BIKER CHURCH

12190 Miller Rd Lennon, MI 48449 -810-247-6332

www.victorybikerchurch.org - info@victorybikerchurch.org

A Tool For Personal Discipleship

PHASE 1

UNDERSTANDING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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PHASE 1 DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM

(Preferably to be used one-on-one, but can also be used in a class setting – or both)
(Estimate about 3-6 months, with weekly 1-1/2 hr. time allotments)

“Understanding the Christian Life”

Lesson 1	<i>Overview of the Christian Life</i>
Lesson 2	<i>Knowing God</i>
Lesson 3	<i>Salvation</i>
Lesson 4	<i>Spiritual Anatomy</i>
Lesson 5	<i>The Christian’s Two Natures</i>
Lesson 6	<i>Relating to the Holy Spirit</i>
Lesson 7	<i>Overview of Progressive Spiritual Growth</i>
Lesson 8	<i>Two Natures diagrams / Abiding</i>
Lesson 9	<i>Abiding Principles</i>
Lesson 10	<i>Abiding Verses and Illustrations</i>
Lesson 11	<i>Today, The Present, This Moment</i>
Lesson 12	<i>Daily Walking In and Out of Fellowship</i>
Lesson 13	<i>Three Phases of the Christian Life</i>
Lesson 14	<i>God’s Sovereignty / Suffering / Trials</i>
Lesson 15	<i>Guidelines for Making Decisions</i>
Lesson 16	<i>Christian Maturity</i>

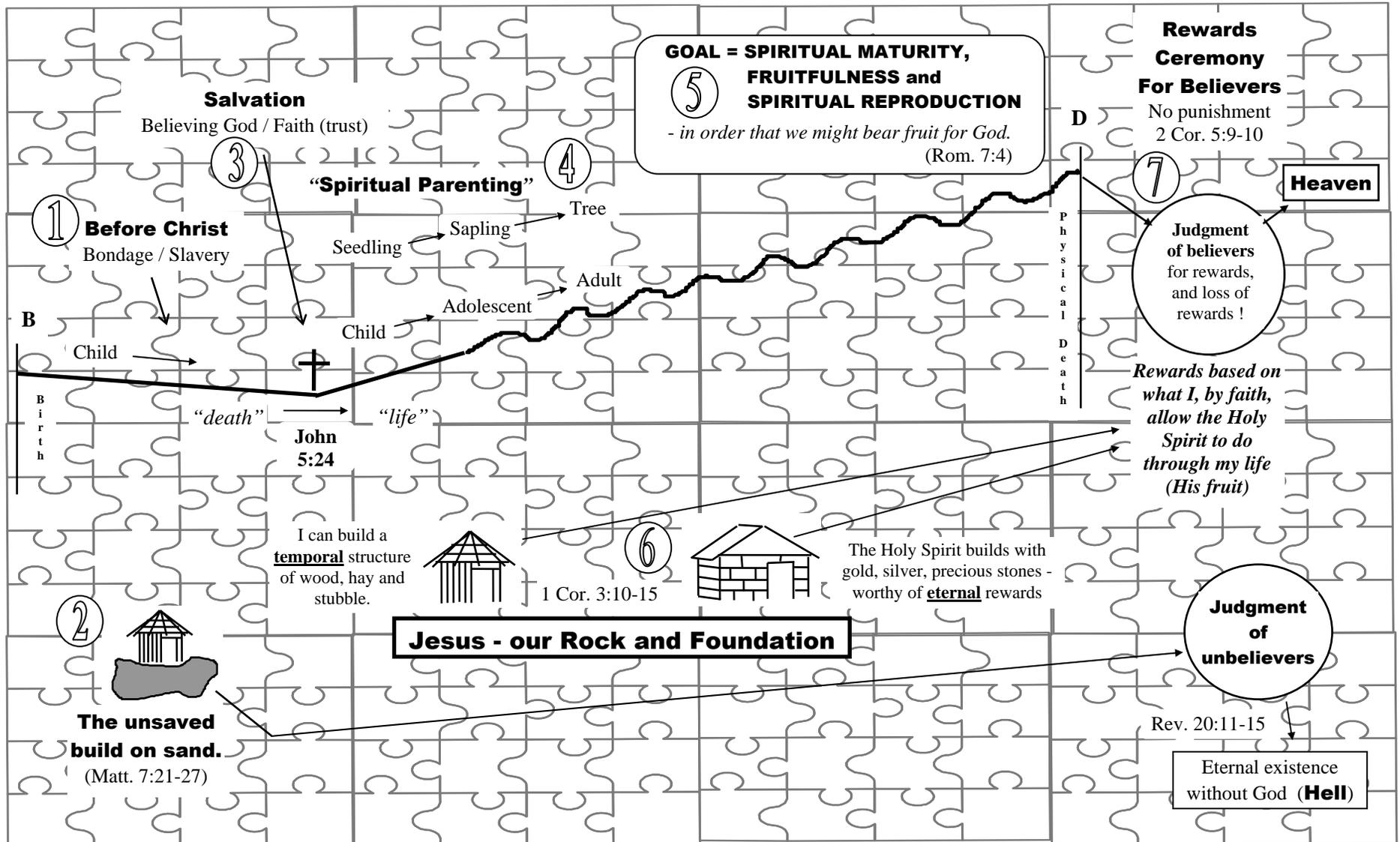
NOTES: It’s important to make a 16-Lesson commitment – There will always be unexpected illnesses and/or circumstances, but, if possible, please make a 16-Lesson commitment - just between you and the Lord.

Important: Carefully read the weekly assignment **before** each session, and write down questions.

Important: Most believers would greatly benefit from having a personal mentor during this Phase, in addition to the class.

Imagine The Christian Life As A “Jigsaw Puzzle”

In this diagram the Christian Life is presented as the “boxtop”, and portions of Biblical truth are presented as “pieces of the puzzle”.



LESSON GUIDE

PRESENTING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS A “JIGSAW PUZZLE”

The main purpose of this lesson is to present a practical overview of the Normal Christian Life. As the Christian acquires Biblical concepts and knowledge we want to help him to mentally connect the pieces to God’s overall plan for his life.

We use the illustration of a jigsaw puzzle. Imagine trying to fit together the pieces of a puzzle without being able to refer to the picture boxtop. It is much less frustrating when the boxtop is available for reference. The second diagram, the Overview, would be like the puzzle boxtop, while the pieces would represent bits of Biblical knowledge.

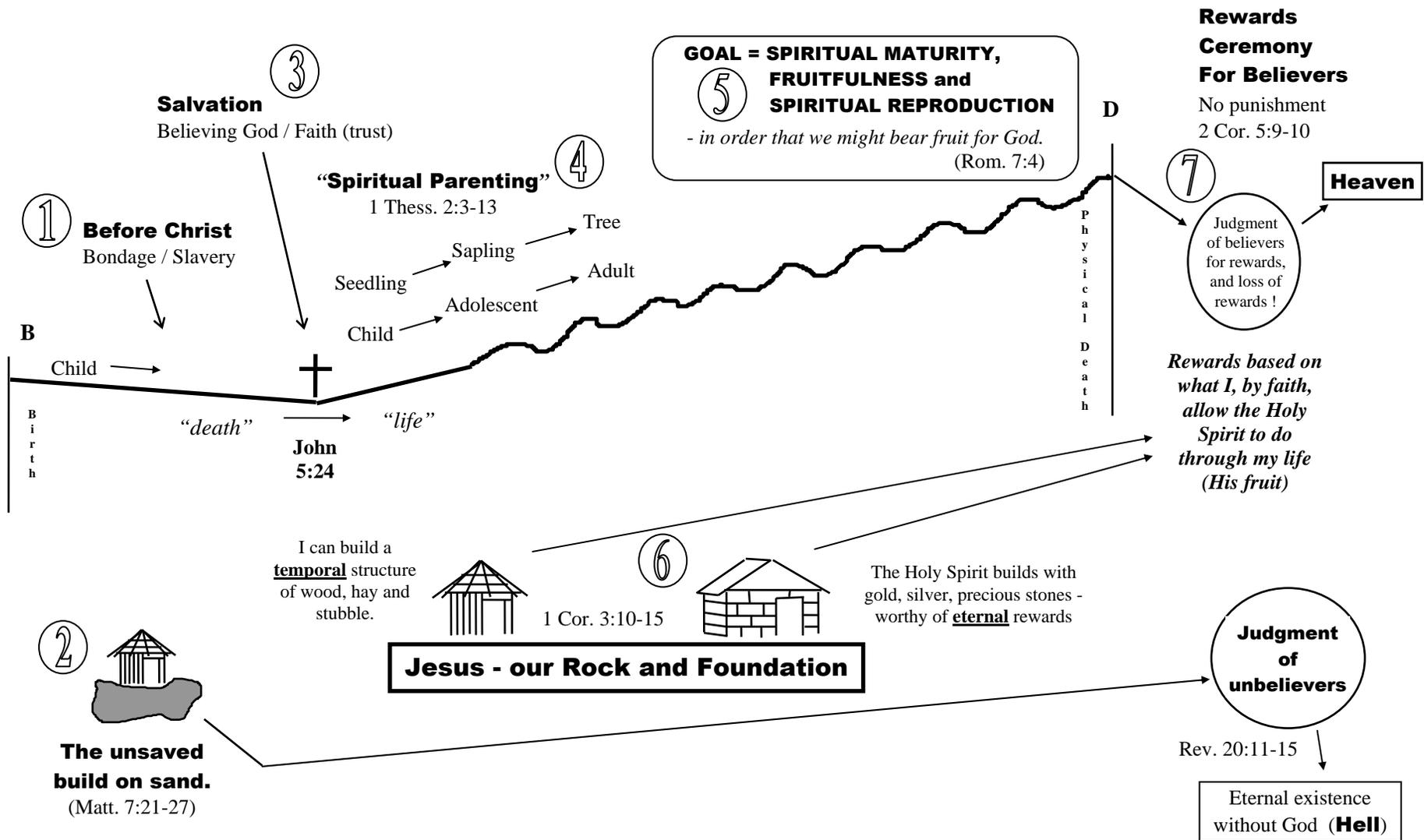
Typically a new Christian will begin to accumulate information from the Bible, friends, books, sermons, conversations, etc., but will have difficulty in knowing how this acquired knowledge fits into his everyday life here on earth, or worse yet he may arrive at wrong conclusions which can distort his understanding of God and the Christian life.

Many newer Christians become frustrated and try to return to their secular life, while others will compartmentalize their life, resulting in a perceived “spiritual life” and a “secular life”. They will often then attempt to live an acceptable spiritual life before others, while at the same time concluding that Biblical principles somehow don’t apply to their secular life. We need to help the disciple to view the various components of his everyday life as a unit, and God’s involvement in every aspect of that life.

A goal is to help the disciple understand how to integrate Biblical knowledge into his daily relationship with God and others, and protect him from falling into the common practice of simply archiving Biblical information.

A growing Christian will become increasingly more aware of his need to continually walk before the Lord (24/7), seeking His approval, and less dependent on the need for approval from others.

ABBREVIATED OVERVIEW OF THE “NORMAL” CHRISTIAN LIFE



LESSON - GUIDE

OVERVIEW OF THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Note for discipler: It should usually take about one session to cover this lesson. We want to give the disciple a **preview** of the **normal** Christian life. Briefly explain each component, all of which will be covered later in more detail.

① **Birth to Rebirth** – We should each be able to easily identify ourselves as having gone through this period, alienated from God, living in spiritual darkness, and without hope.

② If a person rejects Christ and dies during this period, he is like a man who has built his house upon the sand, without a foundation. He will go to the **judgment of unbelievers** to spend eternity separated from God. It is important to understand that this judgment has **nothing to do with believers**, only unbelievers.

Matt. 7:24-27 (Jesus said) *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. “The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”*

Rev. 20:11-15 (the apostle John wrote) *Then I saw a **great white throne** and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.*

*And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was **not found written in the book of life**, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

③ **The Cross** – This event is by far the most important happening in a human’s life. From God’s perspective the Christian has passed from “death” (without His life) to “life” (the Lord indwelling). From hopelessness to hopefulness.

John 5:24 *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who **hears** My word, and **believes** Him who sent Me, **has** eternal life, and does **not** come into judgment, but has passed out of **death into life**.*

④ **The New Life** – It is important to understand that the event of salvation is the **entrance** into a new life with God, prepared by Him to completely meet our every need, as we fit into **His** design. We are introduced to the concept of fitting into **God’s plan** for our time here on earth, which is but a small part of His **eternal** plan for each of us. Two Biblical analogies can illustrate the Christian life: that of a plant growing from a seedling to a tree, and that of a human growing from a baby to an adult. Again, the event of salvation is just the **beginning** of the new life of learning to walk with God. During this period of time it is **very important** for a new believer to be **discipled** (“**spiritually parented**”).

Thessalonians 2:7-13 ... we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. ... we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

5 The Intended **Objective** (Goal) – Just as we would expect a healthy sapling to grow into a fruit-bearing tree, and a healthy infant to grow into an adult and become a parent, so God’s intention is to make of a healthy spiritual infant a spiritually mature and fruitful Christian.

6 **God’s Foundation** and **My Building Options** – God has laid a Foundation, Jesus Christ, which represents my salvation. This is equally true for all believers. However, each of us individually has a choice as to how we will build on that Foundation. The buildings represent the use of my resources (time, energy, possessions) during my physical life here on earth. If I allow the Holy Spirit, as the Master Building Contractor, to use my resources, He will use those building materials to create for me an eternal structure of gold, silver and precious stones. That which I deny Him use of will produce a structure of wood, hay and stubble.

1 Cor. 3:10-15 (Paul wrote) According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

7 These verses speak of a future **rewards ceremony** called The Tribunal of Christ (or The Judgment Seat of Christ), at which time each believer will individually appear before Jesus Christ to be rewarded (for eternity) for what he/she has allowed the Holy Spirit to do through their life while living here on earth. There should be no fear of punishment at this event, although each of us needs to be aware of the potential for loss of eternal rewards, since all that is wood, hay and stubble will be turned into worthless ashes. It is important to note that no unbeliever will be present at this event.

2 Cor. 5:9-10 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Matt. 6:20-21 “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

KNOWING GOD

God desires for me to grow in my understanding of Him. From birth until I received Christ as my Savior, I formed habits of worldly understanding.

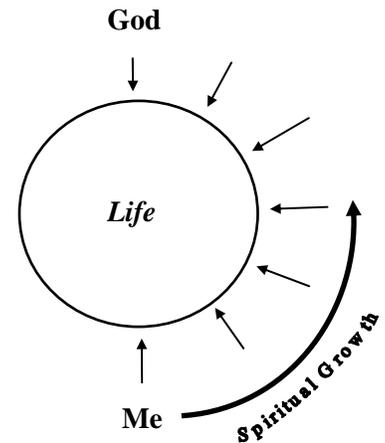
Now He wants to gradually transform my understanding of Him so that I increasingly view life from His perspective. A godly perspective produces godly behavior. It does not please God if I simply attempt to change my outward behavior without allowing Him to transform my inward thinking.

If I want my relationship with God to grow, I need to make conscious choices to seek Him wholeheartedly, in much the same way that a marriage relationship needs to be nurtured.

To not hinder God's work in and through me, I need to maintain an open, honest and teachable attitude towards Him. Since He alone really knows me, my role is to willingly allow Him to make the appropriate changes in my understanding. Jesus is the visible picture of God's character, and the One in whose image God will mold me, as I allow Him.

God desires for me to know Him intimately, in a way that goes beyond mere knowledge "about" Him.

His perspective of life should increasingly become my perspective of life.



Godly behavior is the natural outcome of His continuing inward transformation of my convictions and values

... for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

(1 Sam. 16:7)

1. MY ATTITUDE

a. God desires for me to grow in my understanding of Him, to know His heart.

Jer. 9:23-24 *Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, ...*

John 17:3 (Jesus said) ... this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

Rom. 8:29 *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, ...*

Rom. 11:36-12:2 ... *do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (see also 2 Cor. 3:18)*

Eph. 3:16-19 ... *that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*

The highest goal of learning is to know God!

b. In order to grow I need to actively pursue a closer relationship with Him.

Psa. 63:1 (David wrote) *O God, ... I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, ...*
Prov. 2:1-5 (Solomon wrote) *My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God.*
Matt. 7:7-8 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.
1 Peter 2:2-3 *like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.*

2. GOD’S WORD

TRUTH DOES NOT ORIGINATE FROM ME, OR FROM ANY OTHER HUMAN, BUT ONLY FROM GOD HIMSELF. THEREFORE, ALL “PERCEIVED TRUTH” MUST BE COMPARED TO, AND VERIFIED BY, GOD’S WORD – THE BIBLE.

a. One way God transforms me is through His Word. His Word is trustworthy.

Psa. 119:89 Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.. (see also 1 Peter 1:25)
Matt. 24:35 (Jesus said) “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.*”
John 14:6 (Jesus said) I am the way, and the truth, and the life; ...
John 17:17 (Jesus said) “*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.* (See also Psa. 119:160)
Rom. 15:4 *For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*
Eph. 4:21 ... truth is in Jesus,
2 Tim. 3:16-17 *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*
1 John 5:6 ... *It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.*

b. God’s Word should become as essential as food in my daily life.

Deut. 6:5-9 “... *These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ... “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates ... (See also Deut. 11:18-21)
Job 23:12 (Job said) “*I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.*”
Psa. 119:16 *I delight in Your decrees; I will not neglect Your word.*
Psa. 119:103 *How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*
Matt. 4:4 *But He (Jesus) answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’ ”**

c. Memorization and meditation on His Word will help me to grow.

Psa. 1:1-3 *How blessed is the man who ... his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he **meditates day and night**. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

Psa. 119:11 *Your word I have treasured **in my heart**, that I may not sin against You.*

Psa. 119:97 *O how I love Your law! It is my meditation **all the day**.*

Psa. 145: 5 **On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.**

Prov. 22:17-18 *Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge; for it will be pleasant if you **keep them within you, that they may be ready on your lips.***

Col. 3:16 *Let the word of Christ richly **dwell within** you, with all wisdom **teaching** and **admonishing** one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Visible Reminders: Memorize a verse of Scripture as you go to work.

Write a verse on a card, and tape it where it is visible.

Meditate on that verse during the day.

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d. God's Word is like a light shining into my life, disclosing the secrets of my heart and helping me to see myself as God sees me.

Psa. 119:105 *Your word is a **lamp** to my feet and a **light** to my path.*

Psa. 119:130 *The unfolding of Your words gives **light**; it gives **understanding** to the simple.*

Rom. 10:17 *So faith comes from **hearing**, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

Heb. 4:12-13 *... the word of God is living and active ... and able to **judge** the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ... all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*

e. God alone gives understanding of His Word. Even though some portions may appear difficult to understand, as I am honest and open to Him, He will reveal His Word to me as I have need.

Deut. 29:29 *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the **things revealed** belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*

Luke 24:45 *Then He (Jesus) **opened their minds** to understand the Scriptures,*

1 Cor. 2:12-14 *... Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may **know** the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those **taught by the Spirit**, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he **cannot understand** them, ...*

2 Pet. 3:15-16 (Peter wrote) *... our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things **hard to understand**, ...*

3. PRAYER - CONVERSING WITH GOD

We should think of Prayer as an intimate conversation with our Creator and Master, who is majestic in His creation and control of the universe, while at the same time so loving and caring that he wants to be involved in the most minute details of my life.

I should approach God with a reverent awe, always conscious of the fact that His accessibility is only due to the merit of His Son, not a result of any goodness on my part. We should count it an extreme privilege to approach the God of all creation.

As in any conversation, listening is a major component. Occasionally my time with God will consist mostly or entirely of contemplating and listening to Him as He speaks to my heart or reveals to me something new. He wants me to look to Him with expectation.

One way of honoring God and giving Him His rightful recognition in my heart is by actively seeking and accepting His priorities. This will necessitate forming the habit of not giving Him the leftovers of my time, energy and possessions, but rather offering Him the best of my resources.

a. Conversation with God will be enhanced by a heart preparation, an honest assessment of my priorities, and an awareness of His majesty.

Psa. 5:3 *In the morning, O Lord, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch.*

Psa. 37:7 *Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; ...*

Psa. 119:147 *I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Your words.*

Prov. 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*

Isa. 50:4 *... He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.*

Matt. 6:31-34 *“Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ ... for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Luke 10:38-42 *... He (Jesus) entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”*

Eph. 2:18 *for through Him (Jesus) we ... have our access in one Spirit to the Father.*

Col. 3:2-3 *Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Heb. 4:15-16 *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

1 Peter 5:6-7 *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*

b. Prayer includes adoration, thanksgiving (gratitude), and praise.

Psa. 145:2-3 (David wrote) *Every day I will bless You, and **I will praise Your name forever and ever.** Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.*
Psa. 146:1-2 *Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD while I live; **I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.***
Daniel 6:10 *... Daniel ... entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and **giving thanks** before his God, as he had been doing previously.*
Eph. 5:19-20 *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and **making melody with your heart to the Lord;** always giving **thanks** for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;*
Phil. 4:6-7 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
Col. 4:2-4 *Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an **attitude of thanksgiving;** ...*
1 Thess. 5:16-18 *Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; **in everything** give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

c. Prayer includes confession, reconciliation and forgiveness of others.

Psa. 32:5 *I **acknowledged** my sin to You, and my iniquity I did **not hide**; I said, "I will **confess** my transgressions to the Lord"; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. ... (See Psa. 66:18)*
Prov. 28:13 *He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who **confesses** and **forsakes** them will find compassion.*
Matt. 5:23-24 *"... if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something **against you**, leave your offering there before the altar and **go; first be reconciled** to your brother, and then come and present your offering.*
Mark 11:25 *"whenever you stand praying, **forgive, if you have anything against anyone;** so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions.*
Rom. 12:18 *If possible, so far as it depends on **you**, be at peace with **all** men.*
1 John 1:9-10 *If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

d. Prayer includes supplications, requests for my personal needs.

Prov. 2:6 *For the Lord gives **wisdom**; from His mouth come **knowledge** and **understanding**.*
Matt. 6:5-8 *"... But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is **in secret**, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. ... for your Father knows what you need **before** you ask Him.*
Matt. 6:25-34 *... "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and **all** these things will be added to you. ...*
James 1:5 *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him **ask** of God, who gives to all **generously** and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

e. ***Prayer—Battle in "The Secret Place"***

When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly

—Matthew 6:6

Jesus did not say, "Dream about your Father who is in the secret place," but He said, ". . . **pray** to your Father who is in the secret place. . . ." Prayer is an effort of the will. After we have entered our secret place and shut the door, the most difficult thing to do is to pray. We cannot seem to get our minds into good working order, and the first thing we have to fight is wandering thoughts. The great battle in private prayer is overcoming this problem of our idle and wandering thinking. We have to learn to discipline our minds and concentrate on willful, deliberate prayer.

We must have a specially selected place for prayer, but once we get there this plague of wandering thoughts begins, as we begin to think to ourselves, "This needs to be done, and I have to do that today." Jesus says to "shut your door." Having a secret stillness before God means deliberately shutting the door on our emotions and remembering Him. God is in secret, and He sees us from "the secret place"—He does not see us as other people do, or as we see ourselves. When we truly live in "the secret place," it becomes impossible for us to doubt God. We become more sure of Him than of anyone or anything else. Enter into "the secret place," and you will find that God was right in the middle of your everyday circumstances all the time. Get into the habit of dealing with God about everything. Unless you learn to open the door of your life completely and let God in from your first waking moment of each new day, you will be working on the wrong level throughout the day. But if you will swing the door of your life fully open and "pray to your Father who is in the secret place," every public thing in your life will be marked with the lasting imprint of the presence of God.

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Suggestion: To minimize distractions when you meet alone with the Lord, have a notepad handy to write down any thoughts that you may need to act upon later.

f. Prayer includes intercession, requests for the needs of others.

2 Cor. 1:8-11 (Paul wrote of his afflictions in Asia) ... *we despaired even of life; ... God ... who delivered us from so great a peril of death, ... And He will yet deliver us, **you also joining in helping us through your prayers**, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us **through the prayers of many**.*

Eph. 6:18-20 (Paul wrote) *With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition **for all the saints**, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

Col. 4:12 (Paul wrote of Epaphras) ... *always **laboring earnestly** for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.*

g. Prayer is continual, anytime; but should also include special times set apart. It pleases God when we seek His direction for appropriate times and places.

Psa. 55:17 Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, and He will hear my voice.

Psa. 119:62 At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to You ...

Psa. 119:164 Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous ordinances.

Daniel 6:10 ... Daniel ... continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

Rom. 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

1 Thess. 5:17 pray without ceasing;

Note on 1 Thess. 5:17 “Continual prayer is not prayer that prevails without any interruption, but prayer that continues whenever possible. Paul was speaking of maintaining continuous fellowship with God as much as possible in the midst of daily living in which concentration is frequently broken.” (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.)

4. [Our Daily Bread](#) – (September 19, 2004)

Informing God

We cannot tell God anything He doesn't already know. When we pray, we simply put into words what He's been aware of all along.

That doesn't make prayer unnecessary; rather, it encourages us to pray. We find relief in talking to Someone who knows us and our situation fully. It's a comfort to know that God's response arises not from information we give Him, but from His perfect knowledge of our circumstances. He knows all conditions—past, present, future—that bear on our well-being.

"Your Father knows," Jesus said in Matthew 6:8. He knows our thoughts, our intentions, our desires; He is intimately acquainted with all our ways (Psalm 139:3). He knows the anguish of our heart, the strain of continual frustration, the enemies inside and outside that war against our souls.

So, can we presume to dictate the time and terms of our deliverance from trials or adversity? Can we say our way is better, more likely to develop our soul? No, we cannot teach God anything. He alone knows the way to bring us to glory. Out of all possible paths, He has chosen the best, the route most adapted to who we are and what He has in store for us.

We cannot teach God knowledge, but we can love and trust Him. That's all He asks of us. —David Roper

*The answer God may choose for me
Is sure to be the best,
So may I always thankful be,
And in His goodness rest. —D. De Haan*

God knows the end from the beginning, so we can trust Him with everything between.

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5. CONCLUSION: As I trust God, I can always be assured of His love, knowing He will only act toward me in my best interest, even though at times it may appear otherwise. For Him to do otherwise would be contrary to His character.

Psa. 34:15 *The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their cry;*

Psa. 37:4-5 *Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.*

Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it.

Psa. 86:5 *You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to You.*

Psa. 145:18-19 *The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him; He hears their cry and saves them.*

Jer. 10:23 *I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.*

1 John 5:14-15 *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us -- whatever we ask -- we know that we have what we asked of Him.*

... I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

(Psalm 73:23-26)

SALVATION PRINCIPLES

Like physical birth, spiritual birth is the entrance into a new life. The purpose of this lesson is to explain some things that happen to a believer at conversion. Obviously there are other principles and truths that can be added.

1. MERCY & GRACE

“*Mercy*” = When I am not given what I deserve.

“*Grace*” = When I am given what I don’t deserve.

Illustration of Speeding Ticket -

“*Good fortune*” - if you’re not caught.

“*Justice*” - if you’re caught and given a ticket.

“*Mercy*” - if you’re caught, but not given a ticket.

“*Grace*” - if you’re caught, given a ticket, but the officer pays the fine.

2. THE APOSTLE PAUL DESCRIBES WHAT I WAS LIKE BEFORE GOD SAVED ME, AND WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR ME. (Discuss terminology as needed.)

Rom. 3:10-12 *As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”*

Rom. 5:6-10 *For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ... But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

Eph. 2:1-9 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Eph. 2:12 *remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, ... having no hope and without God in the world.*

Eph. 4:17-19 *... darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God ...*

3. GOD'S PRINCIPLE OF SUBSTITUTION

a. God's grace was evident even when Adam and Eve first disobeyed Him.

Genesis 2:15-17 *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*

2:25 *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

Genesis 3:

:6-7 *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.*

:8-12 *They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."*

:13 *Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

:20 *Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.*

:21-24 *The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like One of Us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After He drove the man out, He placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Adam & Eve were given one commandment, which they disobeyed. Then they tried to make themselves acceptable to God - represented by the fig leaf cover-up. They each blamed someone else. They got what they deserved - Justice. Then God gave them what they didn't deserve - Grace - represented by His animal substitute. An innocent animal's life was sacrificed as a result of their sin. This animal sacrifice was a representation of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sin of the entire human race.

b. The Passover - another picture of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice.

Exodus 12:1 *Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,*

:12-13 *'For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the Lord. 'The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.*

:21-22 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay **the Passover lamb**. “You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin **to the lintel and the two doorposts**; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.

:23 “For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you.

:24-27 “And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children **forever**. “And when your children say to you, ‘What does this rite mean to you?’ you shall say, ‘It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.’ ” And the people bowed low and worshiped.

:29-30 Now it came about at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle. Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead.

John 1:29 The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, **the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!

1 Cor. 5:7 ... For **Christ our Passover** also has been sacrificed.

The Israelites were in **slavery** to the Egyptians. A lamb was killed as a **substitute**.

Wherever there was **blood** the inhabitants of the house were spared from God’s judgment.

When the Lord saw blood on a doorpost, He could say, “**Judgment has already been here**”.

(Illustration: One of the safest places during a forest fire is where the fire has already burned)

c. Jesus Christ’s sacrifice as our “Substitute” was God’s plan for our salvation.

Isaiah 53:4-6 **Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.** All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but **the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.**

2 Cor. 5:21 For our sake He made Christ [virtually] **to be sin** Who knew no sin, so that in and through Him we might become [endued with, viewed as being in, and examples of] the righteousness of God [what we ought to be, approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness]. (Amplified New Testament)

Gal. 3:13 Christ purchased our freedom [redeeming us] from the curse (doom) of the Law [and its condemnation] by [Himself] **becoming a curse for us**, for it is written [in the Scriptures], Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree (is crucified); (Amplified NT)

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ [the Messiah Himself] died for sins once for all, **the Righteous** for the unrighteous (**the Just** for the unjust, **the Innocent** for the guilty), that He might bring us to God. In His human body He was put to death, but He was made alive in the spirit, (Amplified New Testament)

4. I HAVE BEEN SAVED BY HIS LOVE, NOT BECAUSE I AM DESERVING.

John 6:37 (Jesus said) All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away.

John 6:44 (Jesus said) “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Rom. 3:10-12 As it is written: “... there is ... no one who seeks God. ...”

Rom. 4:4-8 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. “Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.”

Eph. 1:3-8 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Titus 3:3-8 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy statement; ...

5. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “RELIGION” AND “CHRISTIANITY”?

“Religion” worldwide teaches that there is something you can do to make yourself acceptable before God. “True Christianity” teaches that only what Christ has done on your behalf is able to make you acceptable before God.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

6. JESUS GAVE AN OVERVIEW OF SALVATION. (John 5:24 - a great verse to memorize)

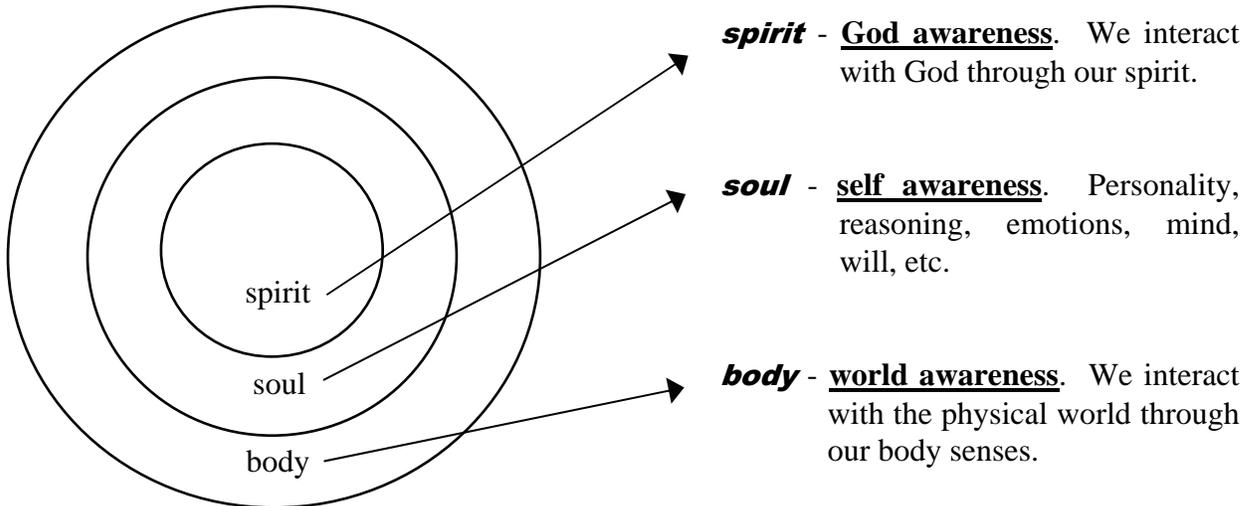
(Jesus said) Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Eternal life is not an object, but rather an endless quality of existence with God.

THE SPIRITUAL ANATOMY OF A CHRISTIAN

1. Man was a unique creation of God, set apart from the rest of His creation. Man alone was given a “spirit”, through which he can know God.

Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Genesis 2:7



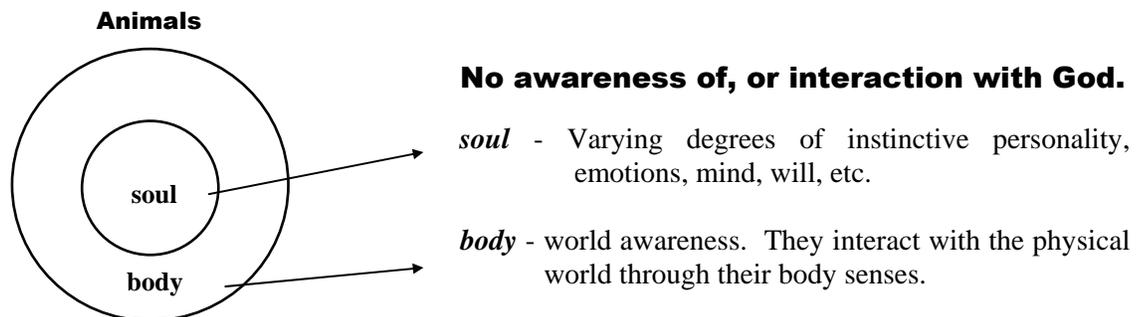
1 Thess. 5:23 *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Rom. 8:16 *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,*

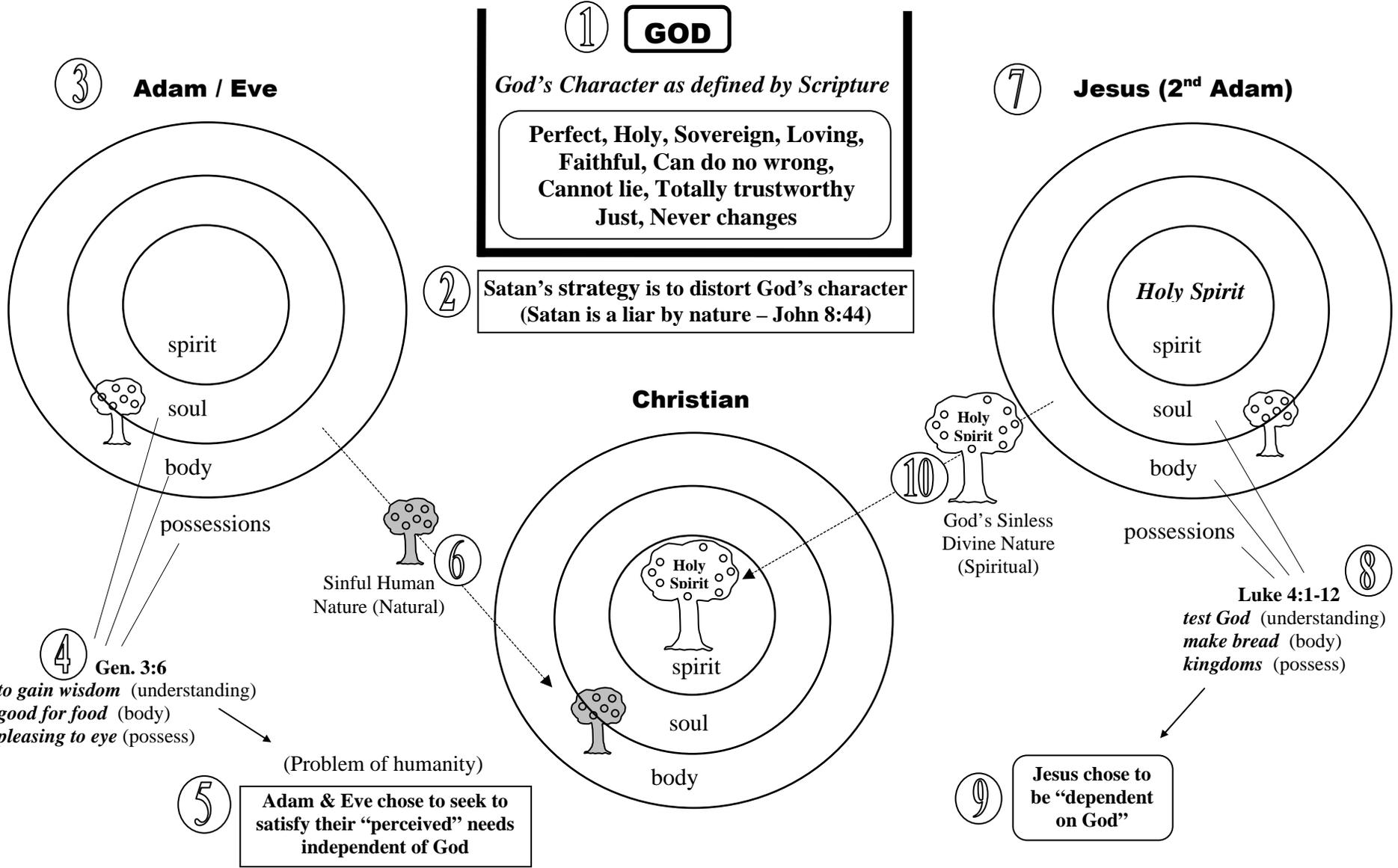
1 Cor. 14:15 (Paul wrote) ... *I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.*

NOTE FOR THE DISCIPLER: The above diagram is a simple transitional tool to be used until the more complex biblical model of the temple is presented in Lesson 3-12.

2. The entire animal kingdom is limited in scope, without a “spirit”, and thus without an awareness of God. (Gen. 2:7 refers to man alone)



HOW I RECEIVED MY HUMAN NATURE & GOD'S DIVINE NATURE



ORIGIN OF THE TWO NATURES - GUIDE

The main purpose of this lesson is to help clarify the events which have led to our present condition as a **believer having two natures**. A number of foundational Biblical principles will be introduced which should help us to more easily understand other truths as they are presented in subsequent lessons.

① **The Character of God** --- It is important to understand the significance of Biblical terms that describe His attributes. His attributes will be reinforced, as we allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us **through His written Word**. **IMPORTANT: In this lesson, the main purpose of presenting certain attributes of God is to demonstrate how reasonable it is to trust Him.** As unbelievers we were accustomed to trusting in ourselves, but as believers we need to form the habit of trusting God in our daily decisions. Reason out that if God's character is as portrayed in the Bible, then it is very **logical** to trust Him completely, and very **illogical** to not trust Him. There is **no** reasonable logic for not yielding to Him. A major reason for distrusting God is our tendency to impute to God **our** character. If God were like us then it would be quite **reasonable** to distrust Him.

② **Satan's strategy** --- is to persuade people that God is **not trustworthy**, by undermining their confidence in **God's character**. **Example:** In Genesis 3:1-5 he sought to instill doubt, insinuating that God is a liar, suggesting that God did not have their best interest at heart, and implying that He was withholding that which in some way would be good for them. If God did not love them, how then could He be trusted?

Gen. 3:1-5 *Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, **has God said**, 'You shall not eat from **any** tree of the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "**You surely will not die!** "For God knows that in the day you eat from it **your eyes will be opened**, and you will be **like God, knowing** good and evil."*

③ When Adam and Eve were created they were made **perfect**, as was all creation. They were complete and **totally** satisfied, not lacking in any way. Everything they did was in total harmony with God's character. Death did **not exist** before that time.

Rom. 5:12 ... just as **through one man** sin entered into the world, and **death through sin**, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—
1 Cor. 15:21-22 For since by a man came **death**, ... **in Adam all die**, ...

④⑤ Adam and Eve believed Satan's lie about God's character and ate the fruit, choosing to pursue self-satisfaction "**independent**" of God. The choice to live independent from God was evident in **three areas**:

1. The **human understanding** (to gain wisdom)
2. The **appetites of the body** (good for food), and
3. **Possessions** (pleasing to the eye).

(Temptations also fall into one of these three areas.) It is important to see this “**predisposition toward independence**” as the “**root**” **problem of humanity** and one of the driving forces behind the global and individual resistance to God.

Gen. 3:6 *When the woman saw that the tree was good **for food**, and that it was a delight **to the eyes**, and that the tree was desirable **to make one wise**, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*

⑥ Every person born into the **human race** inherits the sinful human nature (*pictured as a dark tree*) of Adam, **through their biological father**. Consequently, every human is born with a **disposition of resistance** toward God.

Gen. 5:3 ... Adam ... became the father of a son in **his own likeness**, according to **his image**,
Gal. 5:16-23 ... For **the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit**, ...

⑦ Jesus was born into the human race, but **without** a sinful human father. As the **second Adam**, He was born with the same **sinless** human nature that Adam had before he fell. The righteous character of Jesus, as seen in His life, is what God had originally intended for Adam.

1 Cor. 15:45-46 ... “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The **last Adam** became a **life-giving spirit**. ...

Rom. 5:19 For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made **sinner**s, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made **righteous**.

⑧⑨ Jesus was tempted in the **same three areas** as Adam, but Jesus chose to entrust Himself into God’s care instead of believing Satan’s enticement to seek to live independent of God.

⑩ **Upon believing**, the new believer is born into the **spiritual race**, and receives the divine nature in **the Person of the Holy Spirit**. **Important:** The sinful human nature can **never** be improved. (See Gal. 5:17 below)

John 3:3,6 Jesus answered ... “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ... “That which is **born of the flesh** is flesh, and that which is **born of the Spirit** is spirit.

Rom. 7:14-25 ... For I know that **nothing good dwells in me**, that is, **in my flesh**; ... I find then the principle that **evil is present in me**, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God **in the inner man**, but I see a different law **in the members of my body**, waging war against the law of **my mind** and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is **in my members**. ... So then, on the one hand **I myself with my mind** am serving the law of God, but on the other, **with my flesh** the law of sin.

Gal. 5:16-23 *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another. ... Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;*

A Sampling of Verses Related to God's Character

PERFECT

Deut. 32:3-4 ... Ascribe greatness to our God! "The Rock! His work is perfect, ...
2 Sam. 22:31 As for God, His way is blameless; The word of the LORD is tested; ...
Matt. 5:48 ... your heavenly Father is perfect.

HOLY / RIGHTEOUS / CAN DO NO WRONG, NOR LIE / JUST / PURE FROM ALL EVIL

Deut. 32:3-4 ... Ascribe greatness to our God! "The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.
Lev. 19:2 ... Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.
Job 34:10 "... far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to do wrong.
Psa. 18:30 As for God, His way is blameless; ...
Isa. 6:3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts,
Isa. 57:15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place,
Hab. 1:13 Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, ...
Luke 1:49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.
Rom. 3:25-26 ... whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, ...
Heb. 6:18 ... it is impossible for God to lie, ...
Rev. 15:4 "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; ...

SOVEREIGN

Job 34:14-15 "If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.
Prov. 21:30 There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.
Isa. 46:11 ... Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.
Dan. 4:35 "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'
Acts 4:24 ..., they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them",

LOVE

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, ...
Rom. 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
1 John 4:16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, ...

FAITHFUL / TOTALLY TRUSTWORTHY / DEPENDABLE

Deut. 32:3-4 ... ; Ascribe greatness to our God! ... A God of faithfulness ...
Psa. 33:18-21 ... the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy name.
Psa. 34:4-8 I (David) sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. ... This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!
Psa. 36:5 Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Psa. 86:15 But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.
Jer. 29:11 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.
Rom. 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.
1 Thess. 5:24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.
2 Thess. 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, ...
2 Tim. 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.
1 Peter 4:19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

NEVER CHANGES

Psa. 102:25-27 Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing You will change them and they will be changed but You are the same and Your years will not come to an end.
Malachi 3:6 For I, the LORD, do not change; ...
James 1:17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

HOW TO RELATE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Note to discipler: Each point in this lesson introduces an important concept that the disciple needs to consider and clearly understand early in the Christian walk. As you cover each point, help the disciple to recognize the consequences of not understanding that concept; for example, what would be the typical result of not thinking of the Holy Spirit as a Person? Explain how Jesus was limited by a physical body, but the Holy Spirit is “omnipresent”.

1. I SHOULD INTERACT WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A PERSON, FOR HE IS GOD HIMSELF. I SHOULD NOT THINK OF HIM AS JUST AN “INSPIRATION”, OR AN “INFLUENCE”, WITHOUT PERSONALITY.

Acts 5:3-4 ... Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? “While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

1 Cor. 2:10-11 ... the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. (Phil. 2:1)

Eph. 4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption

Job 33:4 “The Spirit of God has made me, ...

The Holy Spirit is a Person. He is not an influence, or a force, or an inspiration, but God Himself. He is like a best Friend, yet so much more. My relationship with Him is in many ways to be similar to a good spousal relationship. What are the implications of such a relationship? Respect? Communication? Interaction? Nurturing? How would you treat a “force”?

2. HE LIVES IN ME, HIS TEMPLE. HE OWNS ME (WHETHER I BELIEVE IT OR NOT). HIS OWNERSHIP DOES NOT BECOME TRUE AFTER I BELIEVE IT.

1 Cor. 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Cor. 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

God’s ownership of the Christian is a factual truth, which is not dependent on the believer’s acknowledgment of it. I do not bestow ownership, I can only acknowledge and act upon what He states to be already true. New believers will typically not be resistant to this truth, because they don’t have preconceived ideas of God’s expectations. In contrast, older believers tend to accept this truth intellectually, but be resistant to the implications. What are the implications of ownership? What rights or authority are generally understood to be conveyed by ownership?

3. HE IS THE SEAL (DEPOSIT, GUARANTEE, EVIDENCE) THAT I AM GOD'S CHILD

Rom. 8:9, 14-16 ... if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.
... For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ... The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,
2 Cor. 1:21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (See also 2 Cor. 5:5)
Gal. 4:6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, ...
Eph. 1:13-14 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge (down payment, guarantee, deposit) of our inheritance, ...
1 John 3:24 ... We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. (See 1 John 4:13)

The Holy Spirit is God's evidence of my salvation. We should actively seek after the Holy Spirit and be open to His guidance and instruction. A disciple should grow increasingly more dependent on the Holy Spirit and increasingly less dependent on a discipler. A disciple should increasingly recognize the Holy Spirit's promptings in his everyday life.

4. HE HAS A PLAN FOR EVERY DAY OF MY LIFE. HE WANTS ME TO LEARN TO FOLLOW AND OBEY HIM. HE DOES NOT EXPECT TO FOLLOW MY PLAN.

Psalm 139:16 *Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.*
Jer. 10:23 *I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.*
Jer. 29:11 *'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.*
John 14:16-17 (Jesus said) *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;" ...*
John 14:26 *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*
John 16:13-15 *"... when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. ...*
1 Cor. 2:9-14 *... just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; ... Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,*

A disciple needs to fit into God's plan for his life. God wants me to follow Him, He does not want me to view Him as my Servant, fitting into my plans and assisting me whenever I determine I need His help. I should feel free to make tentative daily and future plans, while always being mindful that He may want to change my plans.

5. HE INTERCEDES TO THE FATHER FOR ME AND TEACHES ME TO PRAY.

Rom. 8:26-27 *In the same way **the Spirit also helps our weakness**; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but **the Spirit Himself intercedes for us** with groanings too deep for words; ... He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

Eph. 2:18 *for through **Him** (Jesus) we both have our access in one **Spirit** to the **Father**.*

Eph. 6:17-18 *... With all prayer and petition **pray at all times in the Spirit**, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and **petition for all the saints**.*

Jude 20 *But you, beloved, ... praying **in the Holy Spirit**.*

A disciple needs to maintain a **continual active** communication with the Holy Spirit, through conversational prayer, reading and studying the Word, listening to teachings, etc.

6. HE BAPTIZED ME INTO THE UNIVERSAL BODY OF CHRIST, WITH ALL TRUE BELIEVERS. (REFERS TO “SPIRITUAL” BAPTISM, NOT TO WATER BAPTISM).

Matt. 3:11 (John the Baptist said) *“... I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, ... He will baptize you with the **Holy Spirit** and fire.*

1 Cor. 12:12-13 *For even as the body is **one** and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are **one** body, so also is Christ. For by **one** Spirit we were all baptized into **one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were **all** made to drink of **one** Spirit.*

A disciple needs to understand his **oneness** with **all** members of the universal Body of Christ, the **one** and **only** true Church, bonded together by the Holy Spirit. There are some doctrinal and cultural differences between Christians that should not create divisions or resentments.

7. HE WANTS TO USE ME TO TESTIFY ABOUT JESUS TO UNBELIEVERS.

Mark 13:11 *“When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is **not you** who speak, but it is **the Holy Spirit**.” (Matt. 10:19 / Luke 12:11)*

John 15:26 *“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, **He will testify about Me**,*

John 16:8-11 *“And **He** (the Holy Spirit), ... **will convict the world** concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ...*

Acts 1:8 *but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall **be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

The Holy Spirit desires to use His children to attract **unbelievers** to a believing faith in Jesus Christ. This should be through **spoken words** as well as the **example** of a life yielded to Him. St. Francis of Assisi is quoted as saying – “preach the gospel – and if necessary use words”.

8. HE WANTS TO USE THE SPIRITUAL GIFT(S) HE HAS GIVEN ME FOR OTHERS.

Mark 9:35 ... He ... said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

Rom. 12:4-8 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Cor. 12:4, 7-11 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ... But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ... But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

Phil. 2:3-4 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

1 Peter 4:10-11 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Each disciple is unique in the plan and purposes of God. The Holy Spirit wants to produce interaction and involvement between believers. (Jesus said "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." - John 13:35) He wants to minister to other believers through me. He doesn't want me to simply be focused on how others can meet my needs. Discuss the concept of spiritual reproduction; i.e., investing my resources (time, energy, possessions) in other believers to help them toward spiritual maturity and fruitfulness.

Important: In the physical human body each member functions to serve the body, not the body to serve the members.

9. HE ALONE CAN PRODUCE SPIRITUAL LIFE IN AND THROUGH ME.

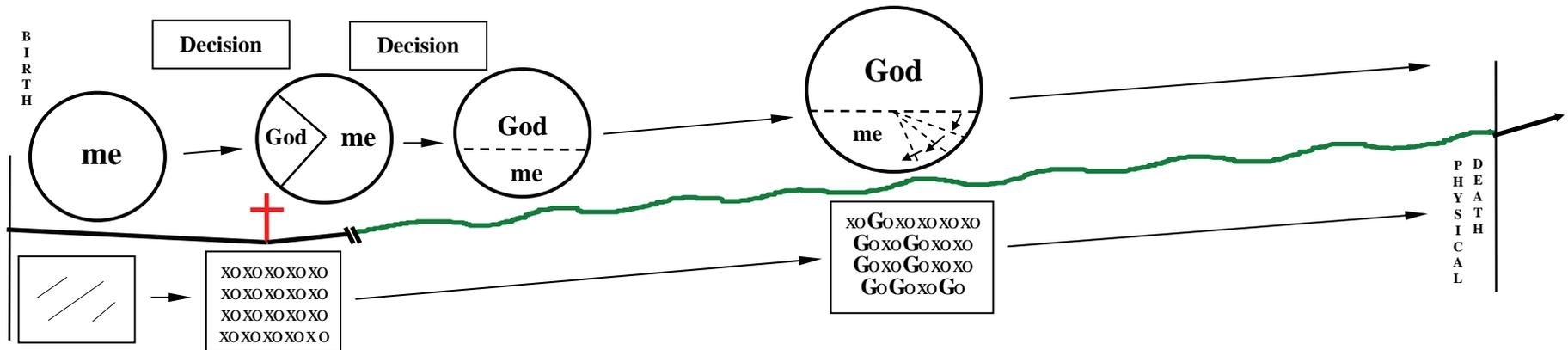
John 6:63 (Jesus said) "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

2 Cor. 3:6 ... the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Eccl. 3:14 I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him.

Anything of eternal value must have its origin in the Holy Spirit. I am, and will continue to be, tempted to rely on myself until I leave this body. The disciple needs to be aware of this tendency, so as not to feel that he is somehow abnormal.

THE NORMAL PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHRISTIAN



CONSIDER: Surrender consists of two parts.

1. First there is a **decision** to surrender the **will** (an acknowledgment of His ownership of my life and the obvious implications of the Master-servant relationship, that is, His “Lordship”).
2. This decision is then followed by the daily **process** of yielding up areas of my understanding and behavior. The Holy Spirit seeks my cooperation in allowing Him to transform me into an increasingly mature and fruitful Christian.

CONSIDER: A **one-time surrender** of the “will” precedes a **progressive yielding up** of “behavior”.

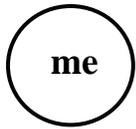
CONSIDER: “**Inward** transformation” will produce “**outward** behavior changes”.

*“True surrender is not simply surrender of our **external** life but surrender of our **will** -- and once that is done, surrender is **complete**. The **greatest** crisis we ever face is the surrender of our will. Yet God **never forces** a person's will into surrender, and He **never begs**. He patiently waits until that person **willingly** yields to Him. And once that battle has been fought, it **never** needs to be fought again.*

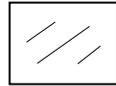
*Jesus says, "If you want to be My disciple, **you must give up your right to yourself to Me**." And after you surrender -- then what? Your entire life should be characterized by an eagerness **to maintain unbroken fellowship** and oneness with God.”*

(Taken from *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers – Sep. 13. (c) 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed (c) 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd., and is used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Box 3566, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.)

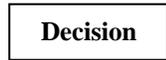
Let's Go Through The Above Diagram Step-By-Step.



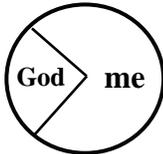
This circle represents the unbeliever.



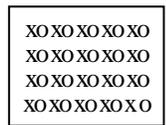
At birth our mind was like an empty blackboard.



Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the unbeliever must recognize his/her hopelessness, and make a “**decision**” to call out to the Lord for forgiveness and salvation.



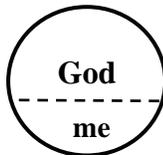
The new believer receives eternal life (an **event**) and the Lord begins to dwell in the believer in the Person of the Holy Spirit. During this phase it is natural for the new believer to be focused on “external behavior”.



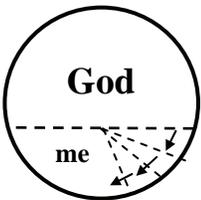
This graphic represents the understanding about life, values, etc. that has been acquired from birth to conversion as a result of the influence and learning from parents, peers, media, culture, etc. That understanding does not disappear at salvation. The believer now needs to learn to walk with the Holy Spirit as a habit. **The function of discipleship is to facilitate that process.**
Note: Much of this understanding is contrary to God, but He alone can correctly manage the process of transformation.
Note: X = Understanding that is contrary to God O = Understanding that is not necessarily contrary to God



In order for spiritual growth to continue the believer has to come to an agreement with the Lord as to **who** is best capable of managing the growth process. **Preferably this takes place at conversion,** but unfortunately in many cases it is not understood and accepted, until later. Typically, there are three motivations that will help the Christian to make the decision to accept the Biblical Master-servant relationship. They are: 1) **Persecution,** 2) **Crisis,** and 3) **Personal discipleship.**



This graphic represents the believer who has made the decision to yield up his independence, and has acknowledged to the Lord His rightful Lordship of Christ over his life. He understands that God alone is capable of overseeing his life.



THE GROWTH PROCESS: As I allow Him, God will use His Word and circumstances to gradually illuminate areas of my understanding that He wants to alter. This process is called “Sanctification” (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:22-24) **“Spiritual growth” is the process in which God’s perspective of life is increasingly becoming the Christian’s perspective.** God does not want the Christian to be a mindless robot, but rather a companion who increasingly enjoys fellowship with Him.



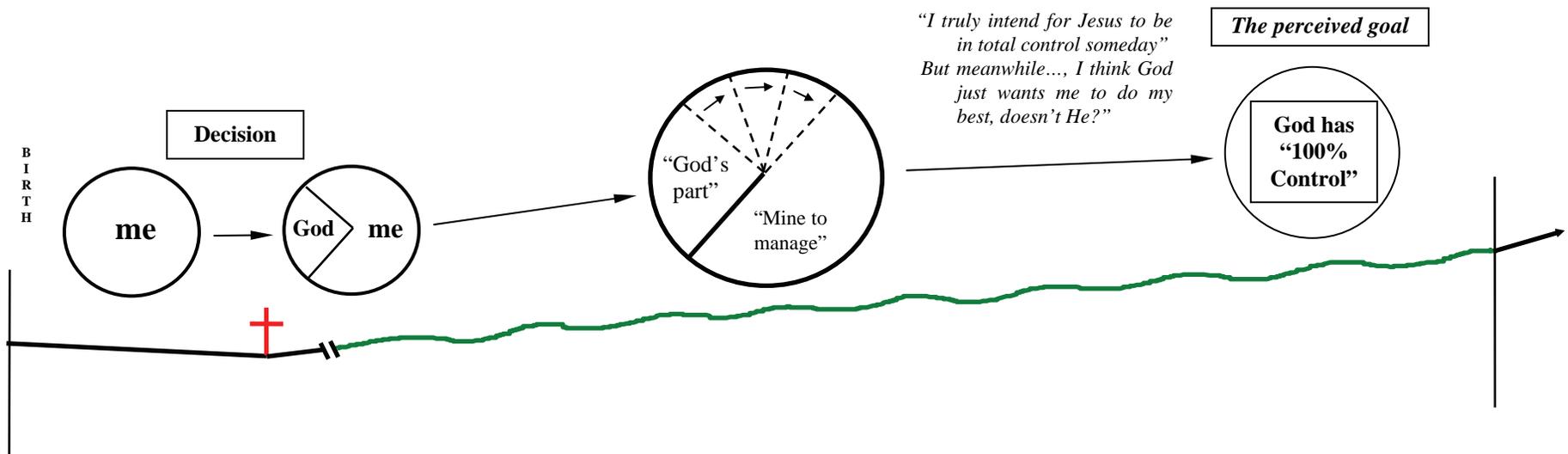
*“As a Christian is **transformed in his mind** and is made more like Christ, he comes to approve and desire God’s will, not his own will for his life. Then he discovers that God’s will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. It is all he needs. But only by being renewed spiritually can a believer ascertain, do, and enjoy the will of God.”*
 (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., The Bible Knowledge Commentary, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

Note: G = Represents areas of understanding that God has changed to His perspective.

THE COMMON MISCONCEPTION OF “PROGRESSIVE SURRENDER”

This Diagram Represents the Abnormal Progressive Development of a Christian.

CONSIDER: Many Christians view their relationship with God as depicted here. A critical error is to attribute to God authority (Lordship) over only a designated part of my life, as if He had not bought all of me. This view of the Christian life usually results from a lack of personal discipleship and/or an unwillingness to surrender one’s will to His Lordship.



CONSIDER: If “Lordship” is presented in the context of a “process of incremental surrender” of external behavior the perceived implication is made that a “totally outwardly obedient” life is the logical evidence of that “total surrender” being attained. Typically the believer sees himself in charge of overseeing that process, and this leads to cycles of frustration and discouragement, since who ever considers himself totally obedient?

CONSIDER: If “Tithes and offerings” are presented as “God’s share”, the perceived implication is that I have a “right” to manage the rest of my material wealth. If “Time” for attendance at church functions, Bible Reading, etc. is understood to be God’s part, then is not the rest of my hours mine to manage?

Problems Associated with the Preceding Perspective:

1. It tends to result in a Christian perceiving God as a threat; such as:

- a. “What will He ask me to do that I can’t do, or don’t want to do?”
- b. “What will He keep me from doing that I want to do?”
- c. “What will He take away from me that I hold dear?”
- d. “Will God fail me if I entrust this to Him?”

2. The Christian views himself/herself as being in charge of the process of spiritual growth, making the determinations as to what can and should be yielded up to the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Christian sets down the rules and limits. This perception is typically based on **pride**, an inflated view of one’s own discernment and capabilities, and **a distorted understanding of God’s character**.

CONSIDER: **There is no reasonable logic for rejecting His yoke of Lordship.** A lack of acceptance is typically based on: 1) a fear of the unknown, 2) an unwillingness to relinquish perceived control, 3) an unwillingness to leave a comfort zone, or 4) an over-estimation of one’s own capabilities to determine and manage their future.

Jesus said: “*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. “**Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me**, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. “*For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*” (Matthew 11:28-30) **Jesus did not say, “learn about Me, and if you like how I do things, then take My yoke!”***

CONSIDER: The real question is, **Is God trustworthy?** If God were like you or me, we would have good reason to be fearful.

One should ask: Does God love me? If God’s character is as described in the Bible, and if He promises to do only that which is in my best interest, what then do I have to fear? Did He not design me? Did He not give me life? Does He not maintain my very existence? Who besides God knows what will really satisfy me? Does not He alone know what is best for me? Does not He alone know how He wants to shape my life and use me for His eternal purposes?

CONSIDER: God’s **ownership** of the Christian is a factual truth, which is **not** dependent on the believer’s acknowledgment of it. I do **not** bestow ownership, I can only **acknowledge** and **act upon** what He states to be already true. **New** believers will typically not be resistant to this truth, because they don’t have **preconceived** ideas of God’s expectations. In contrast, **older** believers tend to accept this truth intellectually, but be resistant to the implications. What are the **implications** of ownership? What rights or authority are generally understood to be conveyed by ownership? A disciple needs to understand that he lives in a spiritual **“kingdom”**, not in a spiritual democracy.

*Or do you not know that your body is a **temple of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are **not your own**? For you have been **bought** with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 1 Cor. 6:19-20*

If God’s intention were to do you harm or mistreat you, do you really think He needs to wait for your permission?

Analogy: The Rooms of Your “House”

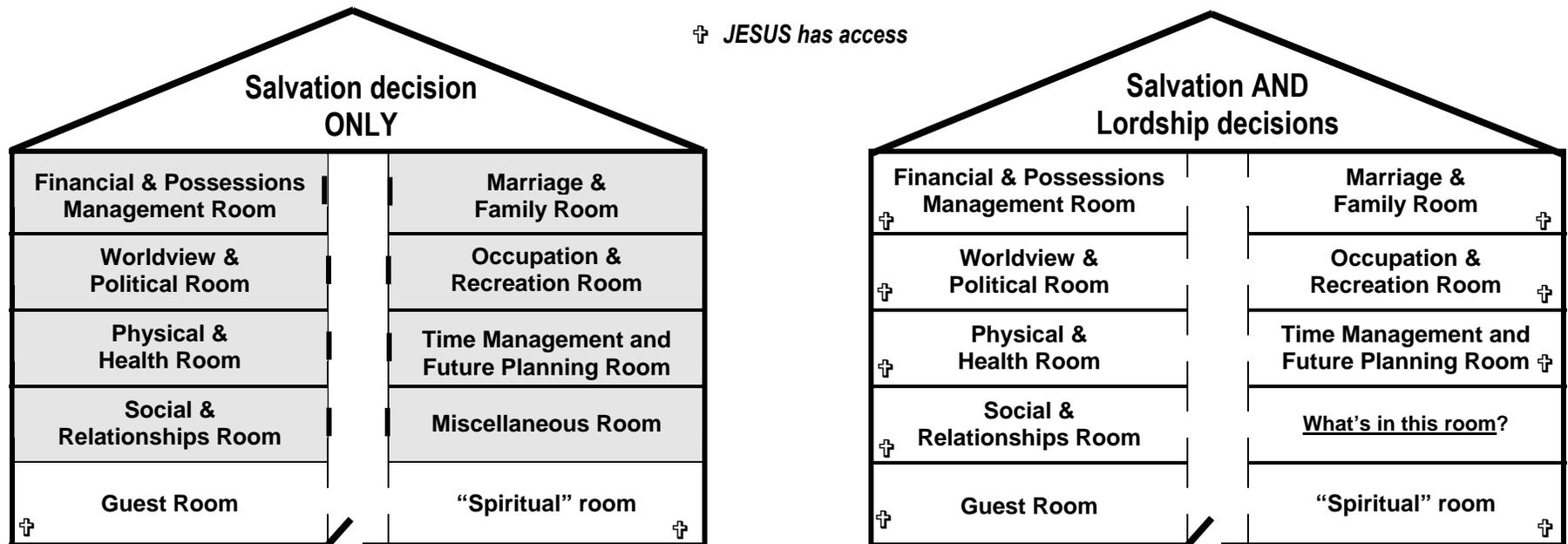
† Does Jesus have access to all the rooms of your house?

A story of two believers....

When Jesus knocked at the front door of their hearts (Rev. 3:20) and asked permission to enter, both of these persons gladly received Him, realizing that His absence had been the reason for the emptiness they had always sensed (**the Salvation decision**).

As new believers each was overjoyed that Jesus was in his house and that his sins were forgiven. Each had a new happiness and an assurance of going to heaven. Jesus was allowed to occupy the “Guest Room” – which was always kept clean and presentable for visitors – and He was also allowed to reside in the “spiritual” room – where the believer went to church services, prayed and read the Bible.

But one day soon Jesus asked each of them for permission to make some changes in other areas of their houses, such as adopting new management procedures, rearranging items, throwing out worthless things, and bringing in some new items. He asked for access to every room. **Each believer had a different response**.



Salvation decision ONLY

The believer in the house on the left found himself reluctant to grant Jesus' request on the grounds that he was not really prepared yet for major changes. However, he would thoughtfully consider any suggestions, and could probably allow some minor changes that wouldn't seriously disrupt his lifestyle and future plans.

Jesus informed him that He (Jesus) is the only One who is really capable of making the correct decisions as to the above changes, since He alone knows what is needed to make the house into a suitable dwelling for God, one that would be usable for His purposes. Jesus clearly explained His good intentions, even guaranteeing that the believer would be more than totally satisfied with the finished product.

The believer replied that while the offer sounded very attractive, he considered himself to be a good judge of the appropriateness and non-disruptive pace of any changes, based on his past experience. He expressed his appreciation for Jesus' presence and blessings, and his desire to make the Guest Room as comfortable as possible for Him.

He assured Jesus that as time went on, he would certainly give Jesus access to other rooms. "Jesus, I'm thankful You live in my house! I'm really happy to know that I can count on You to be there whenever I find circumstances too difficult to manage.

Salvation AND Lordship decisions

The believer in the house on the right also found himself reluctant to grant Jesus' request on the grounds that he was not really prepared yet for major changes. However, he had become aware that he had been **bought** at a great price and therefore Jesus was **the rightful Owner**.

He reasoned, "If Jesus is the Owner, how then can I deny Him access to every room of His house?" (the Lordship decision to acknowledge Jesus as **Master of his life**.)

The believer was somewhat apprehensive, as he didn't understand how this decision would impact his future. But he reasoned that since Jesus had done so much for him already it seemed logical that He was trustworthy to continue doing what was in his best interest.

"Jesus, I certainly don't know what You have planned for my life, and to be honest I have some fears. But I do understand that You own me, and that I cannot possibly make the best decisions for my life since I don't know what You want to make of me, nor what is involved in that process. I'm thankful that You do know, and I want to trust You alone to make the appropriate changes."

"Thank you for letting me be part of Your plans. Wow!"

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

(1 Cor. 6:19-20)

Even though making the Lordship decision gives the Lord access to all the rooms in the house, He alone decides what needs to be changed in each room. The Holy Spirit will manage the changes as He determines best. This is all part of the continued growth process.

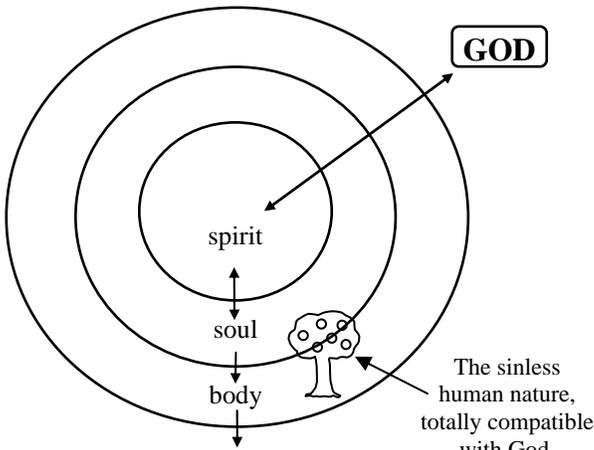
WHAT ROOMS ARE IN YOUR HOUSE? Can you trust God with ALL the rooms? Think carefully and prayerfully if Jesus has access to all of your house – He owns it!

Upon viewing the finished product, nobody will ever regret having made the decision to choose Him as the Manager of their life.

OVERVIEW OF THE TWO NATURES

1. THE FOLLOWING DIAGRAMS DEPICT FOUR SPIRITUAL CONDITIONS.

A Adam (before he sinned) and Jesus - while He was on earth



All behavior was in total harmony with God's character, totally pleasing to God.

 = The sinless human nature, totally compatible with God.

Gen. 1:27 God created man in His own image, ...
Gen. 2:7 ... the Lord God ... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (only said of man)

Gen. 1:31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. ... (no imperfections, nothing lacking)

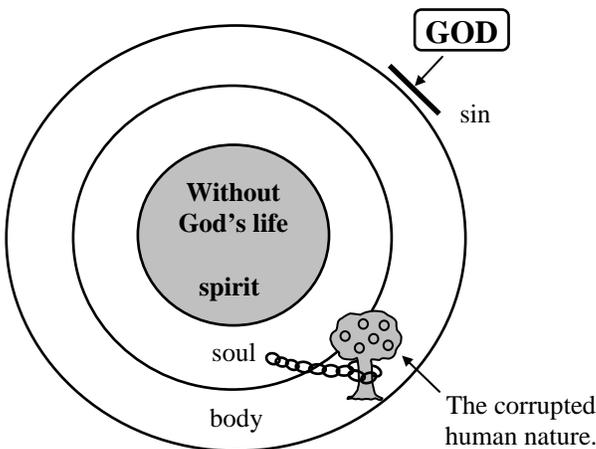
Rom. 5:14 ... Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

1 Cor. 15:45 ... The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam (Jesus) became a life-giving spirit.

Phil. 2:5-7 ... Christ Jesus, ... emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Heb. 4:15 (Jesus) ... One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

B All unbelievers



Their works (fruit) have no life (eternal), are imperfect (flawed), and therefore unacceptable to God.

 = The sinful human nature, corrupted and incapable of producing fruit that is acceptable and pleasing to God.

Rom. 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

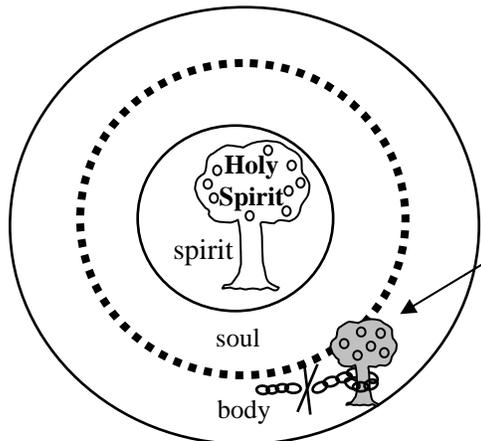
Rom. 3:10-12 ... There is none righteous, not even one; ... there is none who seeks for God; ... there is none who does good, there is not even one."

1 Cor. 15:22 For as in Adam all die, ...

Eph. 2:12 ... having no hope and without God in the world.

Thought: God can only accept that which is perfect (100%, without blemish). Nothing that originates from the human nature has that quality. The unbeliever is devoid of His life. Only God alone can produce anything of eternal value.

C The condition of “abiding” in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. (The “normal” Christian life)
 “walking in the Spirit”



Human Nature is still present and corrupted, but powerless

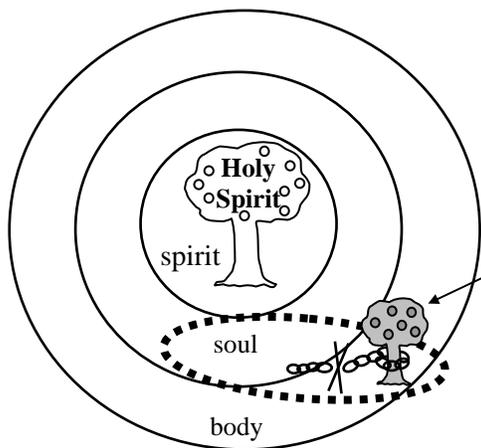
All that I allow the **Holy Spirit** to do through me is **eternal** and **rewardable** at the judgment seat of Christ (gold, silver, precious stones).

Note: The circular “dotted line” represents the “conditional” aspect of abiding.

Gal. 5:16 ... walk by the Spirit, and **you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.**

Gal. 5:22-23 ... the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

D The condition of “not abiding”, having an unresolved issue(s) with the Holy Spirit.
 “walking in the flesh”



The Law condemns

All that is **not** motivated by the Holy Spirit is **temporal**, **without** His life and **not** rewardable (wood, hay, stubble).

Gal. 5:17 For the flesh sets its desire **against the Spirit**, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are **in opposition** to one another, ...

John 15:4-5 “... As the branch **cannot** bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so **neither can you** unless you abide in Me. ... for **apart from Me you can do nothing** (nothing of eternal value).

Rom. 8:8 ... those who are in the flesh **cannot** please God.

Thoughts:

Even though I am walking in fellowship with the Holy Spirit (#3), and have no unresolved issues, **not all** that I do is motivated by Him, or is even pleasing to Him. As I allow Him to grow and mature me, He will increasingly have more freedom to bear His fruit. If I find myself out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit (#4), it is **by my choice**. I do not need to be out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit any longer than **I choose** to be. Restoration to the condition of abiding fellowship (#3) will take place **immediately** upon confession of the offense(s) for which the Holy Spirit is holding me accountable. We have **freedom** in Christ ... **not** independence.

How can I know if I’m out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit (#4)? Usually **symptoms** indicate an ailing body. Similarly look for “**on-going**” spiritual symptoms of the sinful nature, such as: **Stumbling, Striving, Impatience, Lack of peace, Frustration, Sense of defeat, Dissatisfaction, Complaining, Worry, Anxiety, Anger, Irritability, Addictive behavior, Critical or Judgmental attitude, etc.**

2. GOD USES TREES AND PLANTS TO CONTRAST THE TWO NATURES.



The Divine Nature
in the Person of the
Holy Spirit

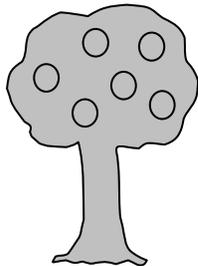
Jer. 17:7-8 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. “For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit.

Psa. 1:3 He (a righteous man) will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither;

Mat. 7:17-18 “So every good tree bears good fruit, ... “A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, ...

Gal. 5:17-23 ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

2 Pet. 1:4 ... He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, ...



The corrupted sinful
human nature from
the 1st Adam

Jer. 17:5-6 Thus says the Lord, “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord. “For he will be like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant.

Mat. 7:17-18 ..., but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ..., nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Gal. 5:17-23 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, ... Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, ...

3. JAMES COMPARES THE HUMAN NATURE TO A “SALT WATER” SPRING AND THE DIVINE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO A SPRING OF “LIVING WATER”

James 3:9-12 ... from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

John 7:37-39 ... Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ” But this He spoke of the Spirit, ... (See also John 4:13-14)

4. THE HUMAN NATURE IS SINFUL, INDEPENDENT, AND BEYOND REPAIR.

Jer. 17:9 “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; ...
John 6:63 “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; ...
Rom. 3:10-12 as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one; ... There is none who seeks for God; all ... have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.”
Rom. 7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; ...
Rom. 8:8 ... those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
Gal. 5:17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

5. MAN ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE OUTWARD BEHAVIOR, BUT GOD FOCUSES OUR ATTENTION ON THE ROOT PROBLEM - THE SINFUL HUMAN NATURE. OUTWARD BEHAVIOR IS SIMPLY THE EVIDENCE OF THE REAL PROBLEM.

Mat. 5:21-22 (Jesus said) “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; ...
5:27-28 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
Mat. 15:19 “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

6. THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW IS TO MAKE EVIDENT THE SINFULNESS OF MY HUMAN NATURE, IN ORDER TO PERSUADE ME NOT TO RELY ON IT, BUT RATHER ON THE HOLY SPIRIT. (See also Galatians 3:1-3)

Rom. 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. (See also Heb. 7:18-19)
Rom. 5:20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; ...

Gal. 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Everything that is motivated by the Holy Spirit is in complete harmony with God’s character.
Rom. 4:15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.
Rom. 5:13 ... sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Note (referring back to Point 3): The Law could be pictured as a sign beside a salty spring in the desert, “**WARNING! THIS WATER IS CONTAMINATED AND UNHEALTHY TO DRINK.**” Salt-water “looks like” fresh water, but it is unable to support human life.

7. IN ROMANS, CHAPTERS 7 - 8, PAUL PRESENTS THE HOPELESSNESS OF THE HUMAN NATURE AND GOD’S PERFECT SOLUTION.

NOTE: In the following verses, “*death*” refers to “absence of life”, i.e. devoid of life originating from God. (for example, a salt water spring).

a. From God’s perspective the believer has “died to” (freed from) the sinful nature, and has been joined to Christ.

Rom. 6:18, 22 *and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ... having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, ...*
 Rom. 7:4 *... you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.*

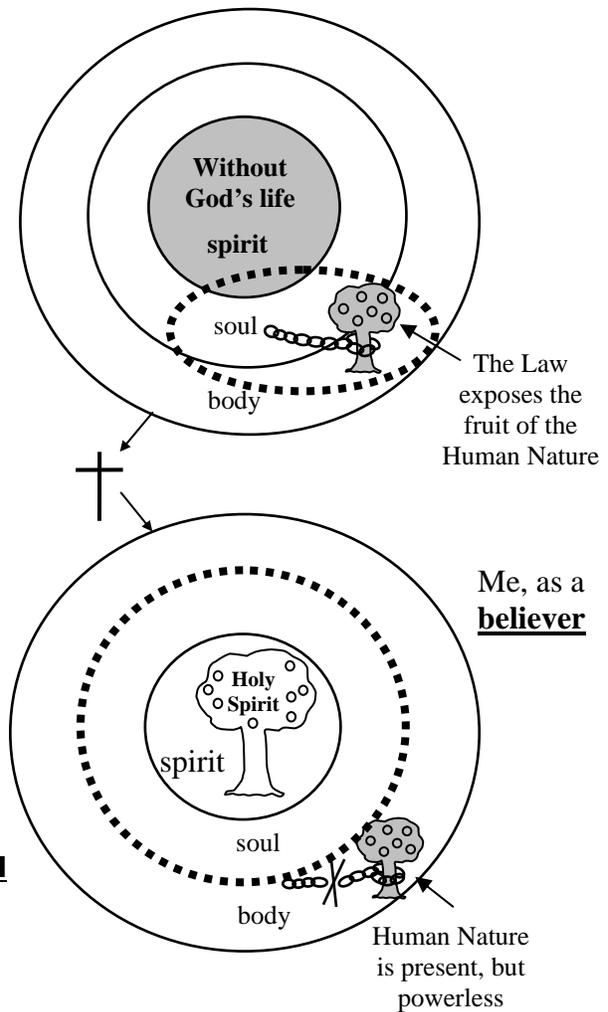
b. As an unbeliever I was dominated by my sinful nature, which resides in my physical body.

Rom. 7:5 *For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death (absence of life).*

The fact is, Christians **died to sin**. The Greek aorist (past) tense for “died” suggests a **specific point** when the action occurred, at salvation. Death, whether physical or spiritual, means **separation**, not extinction (cf. vv. 6:6-7, 14). Death to sin is separation from sin’s power, not the extinction of sin. Being dead to sin means being “set free from sin” (vv. 6:18, 22 above). That being true, Paul asked, **How can they live in it any longer?** Obviously believers cannot live in sin if they died to it.” Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Pub., Inc.) 1983, 1985.

c. Now, as a believer, I have been freed from bondage to the sinful nature.

Rom. 7:6 *But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.*



Note: The circular “dotted line” represents the “conditional” aspect of abiding

- d. **God never intended the Law to be a means by which humans could make the sinful nature acceptable to Him, but rather He used the Law to demonstrate how “totally unacceptable” the sinful nature is.**

Rom. 7:7-13 ... *I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “You shall not covet.” ... So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.*

- e. **Paul experienced what every Christian needs to learn, that the sinful nature is not the least bit improved since I became a Christian. No matter how I try, I cannot make it conform to God’s character.**

Rom. 7:14-16 *For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.*

- f. **Paul became aware that the sinful nature cannot be changed. It no longer represented his real desires, but what other option did he have?**

Rom. 7:17-24 *So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*

- g. **God’s solution for the hopelessness of the sinful human nature was not to repair or overhaul the old nature, but to provide a new nature that is totally compatible with His character. Paul did not reside in Rom. 7, nor should I.**

Rom. 7:25 *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.*
8:1-4 *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

8:5-8 *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, **the things of the Spirit**. For the mind set on the flesh is death (**absence of life**), but the mind set on the Spirit is **life** and **peace**, because the mind set on the flesh is **hostile toward God**; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is **not even able** to do so, and those who are in the flesh **cannot** please God.*

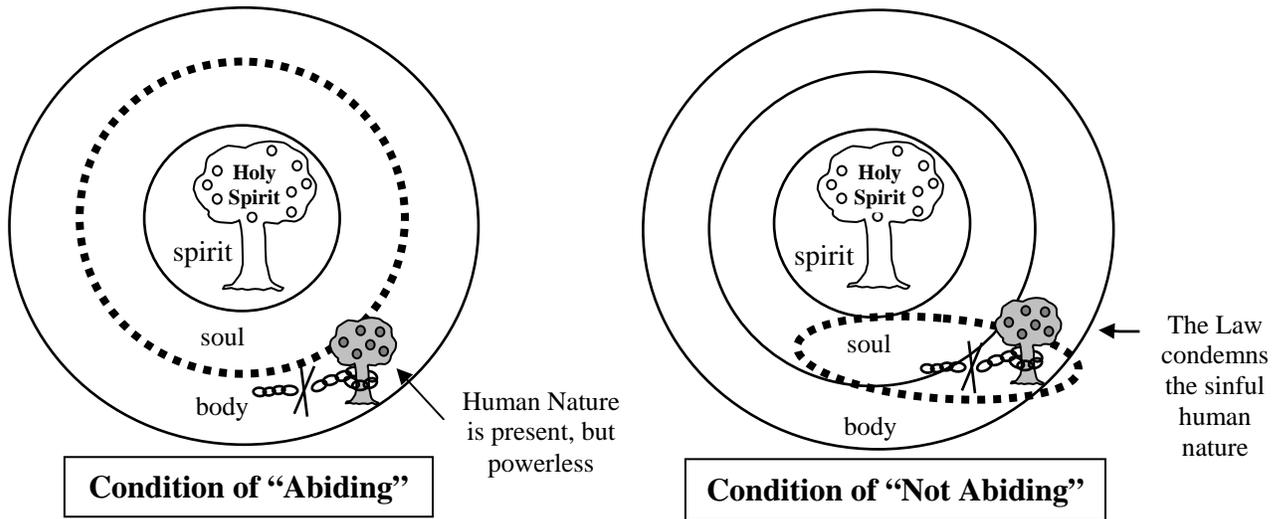
Gal. 2:19-20 *“For through the Law I **died** to the Law, so that I might live to God. “I have been **crucified** with Christ; and it is **no longer I** who live, **but Christ** lives in me; ...”*

Illustration: The **Law of Gravity** illustrates how my Human Nature continually attracts me away from God. *For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, ...* (Gal. 5:17). My sinful nature influences me spiritually similar to the way gravity influences my physical body. I am always aware of gravity and am continually making adjustments so as not to be overcome by it. If I trip or fall I don't have to stay down. No baby begins the physical life walking.

...walk by the Spirit,
and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.
(Galatians 5:16)

“ABIDING” PRINCIPLES TO HELP ME MAINTAIN CONTINUAL FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

“To Abide” simply refers to the moment-by-moment experience of walking in fellowship with the Holy Spirit; that is, without any “unresolved” offenses that are disrupting that fellowship (communion).



Note: The circular “dotted line” represents the “conditional” aspect.

1. WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT FOR ME TO ABIDE ?

- a. God is looking for **available vessels**. God has eternal purposes that He wants to complete in and through my life. While I am abiding in fellowship, the Holy Spirit is free to produce His fruit through me as a **usable** vessel. At any given moment I can **allow** myself to become **unusable** through my unwillingness to remain in fellowship with Him. I should picture myself as an instrument, a vessel, a water glass, etc. A vessel’s main function is to be **available** and **usable** by its owner, not to perform on its own. Is God as the Potter free to use me **at any moment** as He chooses? (Rom. 6:13,19; 2 Cor. 4:6-7; 2 Tim 2:20-21)
- b. We tend to focus on **performance**, but this lesson is not about **doing**, but rather about **being**. What I do is a **result** of what I am being. What is the function of a branch? To **be**, or to **do**? (Jesus said) *“I am the vine, **you are the branches**; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he **bears** much fruit; for apart from Me you can do **nothing**.”* (John 15:5)
*... the mouth speaks **out of** that which fills the heart.* (Matt. 12:34)
- c. It will help to look at this lesson as if it were entitled **“How To Live In Continual Harmony With My Spouse”**, because the clearest **model** God has given us is His designed Husband - Wife relationship. Examining the husband - wife model (or a close friendship) will give me many insights into my relationship with the Holy Spirit.

2. IT MAY HELP TO THINK OF ABIDING AS HAVING THREE DIMENSIONS:

W

WIDTH could refer to the “daily” aspect of abiding. I need to view my relationship of abiding in fellowship with the Holy Spirit as only encompassing “**TODAY**”. Yesterday’s issues should have already been dealt with, and I need to believe God’s promises that His grace will be sufficient for tomorrow’s issues, as they become “today’s” issues. (see also Lesson 1-16)

a. The Lord promises to meet our “daily” needs.

Matt. 6:8-11 ... ‘Give us this day our daily bread.

Exodus 16:4-30 *Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, ... he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack; ...*

Psalm 68:19 *Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, ...*

b. I am told to take up my cross daily, anything greater can be overwhelming.

Luke 9:23 ... “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

c. Thoughts to consider.

I must pursue the habit of “keeping “short accounts” with the Holy Spirit, that is, I need to consciously choose to quickly acknowledge (confess) any unresolved conflict when I have offended Him. The missionary Hudson Taylor stated, “We should never be conscious of not abiding in Christ” (*Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret*). The same holds true for fellowship with my spouse, or a close friend. We are told in Eph. 4:26-27: ... do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. Paul stated in Acts. 24:16: ... *I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.*

Important: The Holy Spirit alone determines when I am being held accountable for offending Him, not me. Likewise, listening to the offended spouse (or friend) is usually the quickest first step to restoring fellowship.

During the time I am walking out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit I am forfeiting His intended blessings (eternal fruit), and will probably reap unintended consequences. *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption (worthless fruit), ... Galatians 6:7-8*

God promises to meet my needs (Matt. 6:19-21, 25-34). Being concerned, prudent and responsible toward the future is appropriate. But if I allow that “concern” to negatively affect my relationship with the Lord, then “worry and anxiety” can easily become sin. He wants His peace to reign in my heart. *Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down, ... Prov. 12:25 (Col. 3:15)*

H

HEIGHT could refer to “an open line of vertical communication” between God and myself. I should jealously guard our fellowship by monitoring our communication moment by moment, being vigilant to not allow anything to disrupt it. I need to form the habit of not just checking on it from time to time at my personal convenience. It is a 24-hour per day, 7-day per week relationship.

Thoughts to consider.

I am told to **pray continually**. *Rejoice always; **pray without ceasing**; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* (1 Thess. 5:16-18) "Continual" prayer is not necessarily conversation without any interruptions, but prayer that continues whenever possible. The adverb for "**continually**" was used in Greek of a hacking cough. Paul was speaking of maintaining continuous fellowship with God as much as possible in the midst of daily living in which concentration is frequently broken. (Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.)

The **husband-wife relationship** will also deteriorate unless it is **consciously** nurtured. (Ephesians 5:25-32)

Caution: Busyness can easily be a trap, causing me to **neglect** the Holy Spirit. Both the Holy Spirit and my spouse will be offended if I carelessly disregard them. Neglect often conveys unimportance. If I will ask Him, the Holy Spirit will **always** be faithful to reveal to me any unresolved problems between us. Never allow what you are **doing** to become more important than your fellowship with Him.

D

DEPTH could refer to my deepening relationship with the Lord, getting to know Him, as in a marriage. The concept of "**spiritual growth**" and the "**maturing process**" imply that there are many things presently in my life that are displeasing to God. Even though the Lord is aware of those many displeasing aspects of my character, He only holds me accountable for those issues that He wants to deal with **today** as He matures me.

a. Illustration.

I can look at the air in a room and it looks relatively pure (**my** perspective). If a ray of light should appear, an innumerable number of dust particles would suddenly be visible (**God's** perspective). Even though God sees my human nature as totally corrupted and unholy if compared to His holiness, He sees me "in Christ", and He only holds me accountable for the issues (dust particles) that He is presently bringing to my attention. The dust particles existed, even though I was not yet conscious of their existence. My responsibility is to be attentive to the Holy Spirit so that He can easily show me what areas of my understanding and/or behavior He wants to change. He will never burden me with more than I can handle.

God deals with me according to my **maturity level** (just as good parents do with their children) and my willingness to learn from Him. *He has not dealt with us **according to our sins**, He is mindful that we are but **dust**.* (Psa. 103:10, 14)

b. As I allow Him, God prunes me so that I will bear **more eternal fruit**.

God's process of making my life more fruitful is described as "**pruning**". ... *every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear **more fruit**.* (John 15:2) Pruning is usually not enjoyable, but always results in more fruitfulness if I allow God to finish His project. An area of my life that appears to me to be beneficial or harmless, may from God's perspective be distracting or harmful, and a hindrance to what He wants to do in my life. **God determines** what needs to be pruned. My responsibility is to be teachable and attentive to Him, careful to not allow my "good" things to rob me of God's "best". (e.g. Martha – Luke 10:38-42)

c. **Caution: Don't be surprised by the sinfulness of your human nature.**

As we grow spiritually, we will increasingly see our human nature as God sees it. Flaws become more visible as they are more exposed to light. The closer we are to God the more abhorrent our human nature will become to us. (... *all things become visible when they are **exposed by the light**, ... Eph. 5:13)*

3. PREVALENT MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CONDITION OF ABIDING

- a. At salvation I was put into the condition of abiding fellowship with the Lord, by virtue of Jesus' righteousness, not because I deserve it. Now, as a believer, I cannot keep myself in the condition of abiding through my own efforts. My goal should be to please Him, and to be sensitive to Him in order to not allow any issues that He brings to my attention to continue unresolved. Those unresolved issues can disrupt my fellowship, as in human relationships.

God's greatest concern about your sin is not the degree to which it falls short of His standard of righteousness for you, but rather the disruption it causes in His fellowship with you, and the consequent hindrance it causes as He seeks to accomplish His purposes in and through you.

"Avoiding sin" should not be the primary focus of your Christian walk, but rather maintaining a continual abiding communion with Him. The writer of Hebrews tells us: ... *let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, ...* (Heb. 12:1-2)

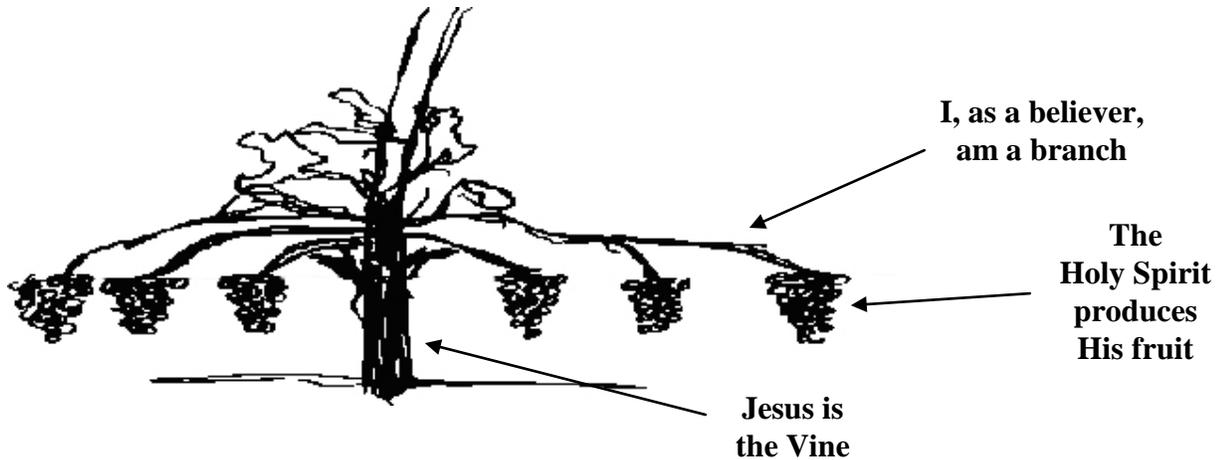
- b. There is a prevalent misconception that the condition of abiding is somehow "attained to", when in reality it is the birthright of every child of God. Abiding does not speak of having achieved a certain level of maturity. Did you as a child have to earn the privilege of being in fellowship with your parents? God has made provision for every Christian to habitually live in harmony with Him without extended periods of disrupted fellowship (communion). Abiding is not restricted by my lack of knowledge, past experiences, or personal limitations, but only by my unwillingness to acknowledge and confess unresolved issue(s) that are hindering God from blessing me and using me as He desires. The Biblical "normal" Christian life is one of habitually abiding; to not habitually abide is abnormal. (2 Peter 1:3-4)
- c. My natural tendency is to categorize "acts of behavior" and build for myself a mental list of "do's" and "don'ts". It seems easier to follow a "list" of perceived expectations than to be continually attentive to the Holy Spirit as He leads me. I need to form the habit of carefully looking at each choice and judging if it is pleasing to Him at this moment. What I tend to consider "insignificant" may be very significant to Him. It will help me to consider "sin" as "anything that is displeasing to God".

Example: I could ask the question, "can reading the Bible be sinful?" Imagine yourself resting on a riverbank reading your Bible. You hear a child frantically struggling against the current as he is being swept downriver. You continue faithfully reading your Bible. Shortly a mother appears and asks if you've seen her child. You tell her that you would have saved the child if you hadn't been occupied. You can imagine her response (and God's). This may seem extreme, but it points out the danger of "categorizing" acts of behavior.

John 5:30 (Jesus said) ... *I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*
2 Cor. 5:9 *Therefore we also have as our ambition, ... to be pleasing to Him.*
Eph. 5:8-10 ... *walk as children of Light ... trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*
Romans 14:23 ... *whatever is not from faith is sin.*

VERSES RELATED TO “ABIDING”

1. AS I AM “ABIDING” I AM DEPICTED AS A FRUIT-BEARING BRANCH ON A TREE.



John 15:1-6 (Jesus said) “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. (Note: see Lesson 3-10 for a more detailed explanation of John 15)

:7-11 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

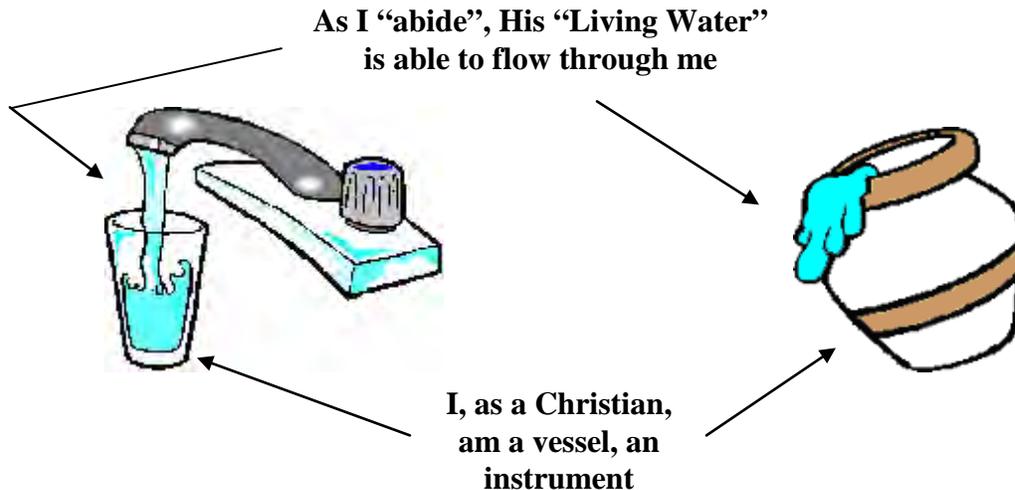
:12-16 “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. “You are My friends if you do what I command you. “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Does the branch produce the fruit, or is the branch simply a conduit (instrument, vessel) through which the life of the Vine flows?

2. A. AS I AM “ABIDING” I AM DEPICTED AS A VESSEL, AN INSTRUMENT.

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. (2 Tim. 2:20-21)



A “faucet” with “living” water can be a useful illustration. Although the water pressure is always constant, the “on-off” feature has to be maintained in the “On” position for the water to freely flow. During the time I am not in abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit the on-off feature is in the “Off” position.

B. AS I AM “ABIDING”, I ALLOW GOD’S “LIVING WATER” TO FLOW THROUGH ME AS THROUGH A SERVING VESSEL. (SEE ALSO EZEK. 47:1-12)

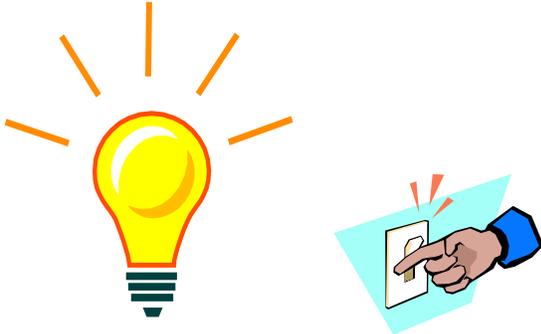
Jer. 2:13 “... Me, the fountain of living waters, ... (see also Jer. 17:13)

John 4:14 (Jesus said) ... *whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.* “

John 7:37-39 ... *Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

James 3:8-12 *But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.*

3. A. AS I AM “ABIDING”, I AM DEPICTED AS A VESSEL THROUGH WHICH GOD’S LIGHT IS ABLE TO SHINE.



The *electricity* represents **GOD’S LIFE** flowing through me.

The *bulb* represents **ME** as a Christian
The *light* that is given off represents the **Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

As I remain in communion with the Holy Spirit (*connected, light switch “On”*), I am allowing His life (*electricity*) to increasingly flow through me (*bulb*), which He will then use to influence and attract others (*light*).

Matt 5:14-16 (Jesus said) “You are the **light** of the world. A **city** set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a **lamp** and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives **light** to all who are in the house. “**Let** your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and **glorify your Father** who is in heaven.

2 Cor 4:6-7 For God, who said, “**Light shall shine out of darkness,**” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give **the Light** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this **treasure** in earthen **vessels**, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be **of God** and **not** from ourselves;

Phil. 2:15 ... children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear **as lights** in the world,

B. AS I AM “ABIDING”, I AM WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF GOD’S PRESENCE.



1 John 1:5-10 ... this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that **God is light**, and in Him there is **no darkness at all**. If we say that we have **fellowship with Him** and yet **walk in the darkness**, we lie and do not practice the truth; but **if we walk in the light** as He Himself is in the light, we have **fellowship** with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 John 2:8-11 ... the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light and **yet hates his brother is in the darkness** until now. The one who loves his brother **abides in the light** and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

John 8:12 ... Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will **not walk in the darkness**, but will have the **Light of life**.”

4. GOD HAS DESIGNED THE ON-GOING HEALTHY COMMUNION BETWEEN A CHRISTIAN HUSBAND AND WIFE TO BE A PICTURE OF THE ON-GOING COMMUNION BETWEEN THE HOLY SPIRIT AND A CHRISTIAN. ONE OF THE PURPOSES OF A GOD-CENTERED CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IS MEANT TO BE A DEMONSTRATION TO OTHERS OF HOW HE CAN BRING ABOUT A CONSISTENT HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS THAT ARE SURRENDERED TO HIM. IF I AM IN DOUBT AS TO HOW I SHOULD RELATE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, I CAN ASK MYSELF, "HOW SHOULD I RELATE TO A SPOUSE (OR TO A CLOSE FRIEND)"?



Eph. 5:22-33 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she

would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband. (see also **John 17:11, 21-22**)

Gen. 2:24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

1 Cor. 6:16-17 ... the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

Col. 3:18-19 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

1 Peter 2:18 – 3:7 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; ... In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands ... You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

TODAY - THE PRESENT - THIS MOMENT

God wants me to be free from the burden of “unresolved issues” of the PAST or the FUTURE, allowing Him freedom to produce His fruit through my life.

PAST

- Are there issues from my past that need to be resolved?
- Do I need to forgive or reconcile with someone, or confess a wrong to someone?
- Do I need to make restitution for harm done? (physical, financial, etc.)
- Are there sins I need to confess to the Lord?

PRESENT

“Am I in fellowship with (“abiding with”) the Holy Spirit at this moment?”

IF NOT, WHY NOT?

FUTURE

- Are worries about the future disrupting my fellowship with the Lord?
- Do I need to acknowledge my worry or anxiety as sin?

1. ISSUES RELATED TO OTHERS - IN THE PAST, OR AT THIS MOMENT.

- a. If I think I can maintain good fellowship with God, and at the same time disregard relationships with others, I am deceiving myself.**

1 John 2:9-11 *The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates (see note) his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates (see note) his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

1 John 4:20-21 *If someone says, “I love God,” and hates (see note) his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.*

NOTE: “Love” is a choice “to do what is best for someone”. That is not necessarily the same as “doing what is pleasing to someone” (see also Heb. 12:6,11). I do not have to “feel affectionate” toward someone, but I do have to “love” them. Don’t think of “hate” as necessarily “malicious”, but rather as “not doing what is in someone’s best interest”. In other words, “the absence of love” or “not loving”.

- b. My unwillingness to forgive someone can limit my availability and usefulness to God, and can thus affect His fruit through my life.**

Mark 11:25 *“whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions.*

Col. 3:12-13 *So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.*

c. Does the Holy Spirit want me to apologize to someone I have offended? It is my responsibility to pursue restoration of fellowship.

Matt. 5:23-24 “... if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

d. Does the Holy Spirit want me to pursue reconciliation with someone who has offended me? It is my responsibility to pursue restoration of fellowship.

Matthew 18:15 If your brother wrongs you, go and show him his fault, between you and him privately. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. (AMPNT)

e. Does the Holy Spirit want me to make restitution to someone whom I have caused loss? (Repay a debt? A loan? Taxes owed?)

Num. 5:5-7... the Lord spoke ... ‘When a man or woman commits any of the sins of mankind, ... and that person is guilty, then he shall confess his sins which he has committed, and he shall make restitution in full for his wrong ...
Rom. 13:8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; ...

f. I am not responsible for someone else’s unwillingness to love or forgive me, but God does hold me accountable for loving and forgiving others.

Rom. 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;
Rom. 12:16-18 ... Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
Rom. 12:20-21 “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
Phil. 2:1-4 ... do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

NOTE: Remember – “Love” is a choice “to do what is in someone’s best interest”.

2. PERSONAL ISSUES - JUST BETWEEN THE LORD AND MYSELF.

a. Is there an unresolved personal issue(s) that the Holy Spirit wants me to acknowledge and confess to Him?

1 John 1:9-10 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

b. IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONTEMPLATE:

(1) ACCOUNTABILITY - Most Christians subconsciously reason that God leaves it in their hands to determine when there is a problem between them and God that needs to be resolved. That is wrong! I am **not** the one who decides for what I am being held accountable. The Holy Spirit **alone** makes that determination. In a parent-child relationship, the parent's responsibility is to **explain** to the child the nature of the problem. The child's responsibility is to **attentively listen** and **respond**.

(2) DISAGREEMENTS - When a husband and wife begin their marriage they have many differing opinions. Hopefully as they nurture their relationship many of those differences will diminish. Some will not. Some differences of opinion will remain until death. That is okay, we are each designed with a unique personality, and we should respect that difference in others. Do I really want everyone to think as I do? My goal should be to live in harmony (fellowship) with others, not to pressure everyone to hold my views. That is true of my spouse and my children as well as others.

I need to ask myself: Am I bothered by my spouse's (or other's) behavior, or views, because it's not the way "I" do things, or the way "I" think? Does God say their behavior or view is displeasing (sin) to Him? If I am bothered or offended by another's beliefs or behavior, yet God does not say it is sin, then I may need to examine my own heart. Maybe I'm judgmental. Maybe God is trying to show **me** an area He wants to change in **my** life. It is perfectly normal to hold different opinions and yet maintain mutual respect and fellowship.

(3) GROWTH - Having no unresolved issues for which I am being held accountable does **not** mean that everything I am now doing is pleasing to God. What does the concept of growth mean? We grow "**to**" something and "**from**" something. As we grow physically, we are advancing **from** a level of weakness **to** a level of increased physical capability. Likewise, as we grow spiritually, we are advancing from a level of reliance on **self** to a level of increasing reliance on **God**. I need to understand that spiritual strength is not what **I** can do, but rather what God is able to do through me. There is only one thing that hinders the Lord from using my life, unconfessed sin (anything that displeases the Lord) for which He is holding me accountable. The term "**growth**" implies then that there are things in my life today that are displeasing to the Lord, hence the need "to grow". Thankfully He does not hold me accountable for all that displeases Him. In fact, I am not even aware of all that He would like to change. If I am growing spiritually, I will become increasingly more sensitive to His voice. He wants me to learn to hear His whisper without having to shout at me.

We are all very familiar with the concept of growth, because it is the way we raise our children. For example, my 6-month old baby messes in his diaper. Am I shocked? Do I scold him or spank him? Do I find it pleasing that he ruined his diaper? Of course not! I know that he does not yet understand. However, if he does the same thing when he is 6 years old, it will be quite different. That is the same way the Holy Spirit trains me, except that He is more patient and gentle than we tend to be.

Again, what I need to remember is that the Holy Spirit is the **only One** who is able to determine what is displeasing to Him. He is not waiting for me to make those determinations. Do you expect your baby to tell you the rules by which he will live in harmony with you? That would be ridiculous. Neither does the Holy Spirit expect **me** to tell Him what is acceptable!

3. ISSUES RELATED TO THE FUTURE. GOD DOES NOT WANT ME TO BE WEIGHED DOWN BY EITHER THE PAST OR THE FUTURE.

- a. It is good to be “concerned” about the future, but concern can become worry, and worry can become anxiety. I need to be careful to not allow those emotions to become a pretext for not trusting in God’s care for me.

CONCERN ➡ WORRY ➡ ANXIETY ➡ PANIC

- b. It is okay to be concerned (wise, prudent) and to plan and prepare for the future. Paul’s “concern” for the welfare of the believers was correct.

2 Cor. 11:28-29 (Paul said) ... *there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?*
Prov. 10:5 *He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.*

- c. But I am told to “not worry” about the future. I should not regard that instruction as just a “suggestion”. Worry and anxiety about the future can be the evidence of an unwillingness to trust God, and can become sinful.

Matt. 6:31-34 “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ ... for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.
Phil. 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, ...

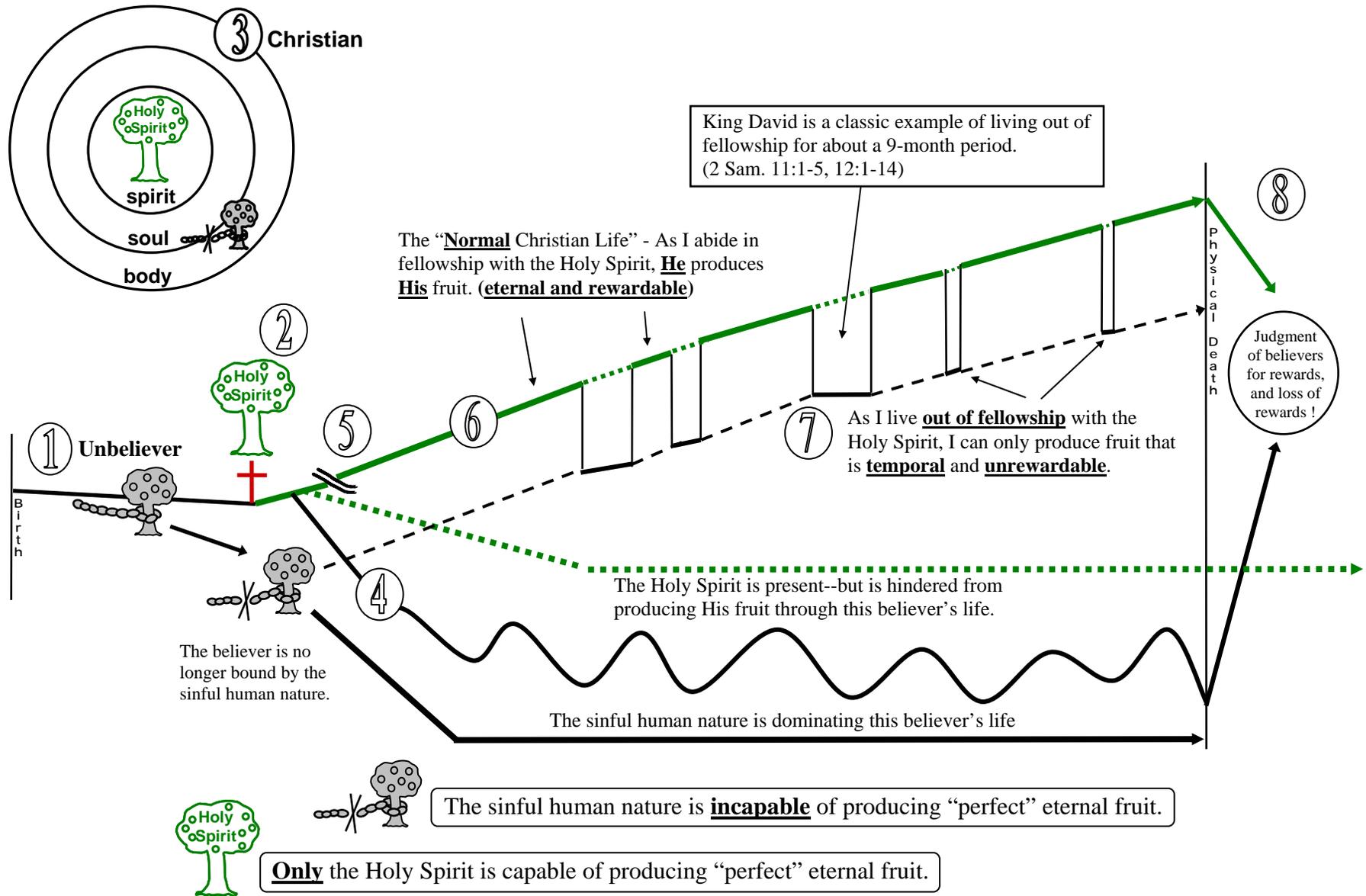
- d. I can count on the Holy Spirit to faithfully and lovingly take care of my need.

Phil. 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
1 Peter 5:6-7 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

- e. I am told to “follow” Him, even though it is always tempting to “lead”. He wants me to allow Him to be intimately involved in all my future plans.

Prov. 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.
Luke 9:23-24 And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ...
James 4:13-17 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. ... Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” ...

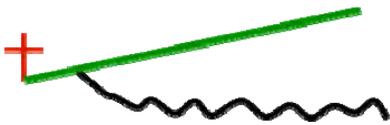
LIVING DAILY IN (OR OUT OF) FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT



Teaching Guide for Lesson 1-12

LESSON OVERVIEW:

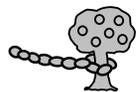
This lesson is an overview of concepts previously covered. We want to help believers to understand their continual interaction with the two natures, and how that impacts their daily relationship with the Holy Spirit.



After Salvation there are two paths for the new believer. Both paths represent believers.

1. One line gradually goes upward and into the "spiritual Promised Land". This upper path represents a believer who sees the Lord as his **Master**, that is, the One who oversees and manages his life.
2. The lower path leads into a "spiritual desert." This lower path represents the believer who, either out of ignorance or choice, has **not** acknowledged the Lordship of Christ over his life.

①



Before salvation, we were unbelievers, bound to the sinful human nature (represented by the chain around the darkened tree.)

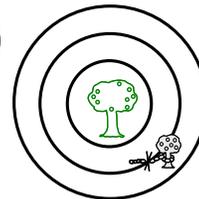
②



At the cross we were delivered from the "**penalty**" of sin (represented by the "broken chain" around the darkened tree). During this life from the cross until death we are being delivered from the "**power**" of sin. And at physical death we will be delivered from the "**presence**" of sin. At the moment of salvation, the believer is freed from the mastery of the sinful human nature, and receives the Holy Spirit, Who indwells the believer from that time forward. We start the Christian life abiding in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and choose to take one of two paths: (#4 or #5/6)

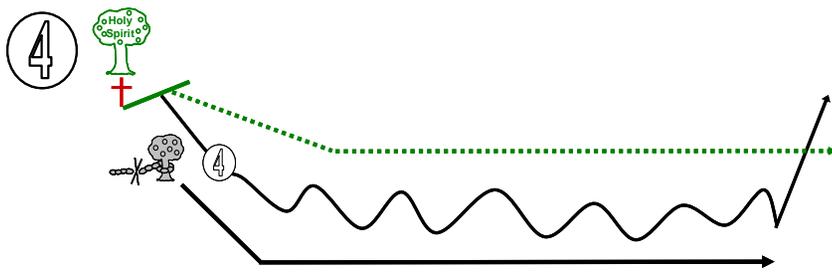
It is important to note that while **the believer has been set free from the mastery of the sinful human nature, the sinful nature does not cease to exist and will continue in the believer until physical death occurs**, at which time the believer will be freed from the presence of the sinful nature.

③



Upon believing, I was born into the spiritual race, and received God's divine nature in the Person of the Holy Spirit. I am no longer bound to the sinful nature, although it is still present. Paul wrote: *knowing this, that **our old self was crucified with Him**, ..., so that we would **no longer be slaves to sin**; for he who has died is **freed from sin**.* (Romans 6:6-7)

The unbeliever has no option but to be mastered by the sinful nature, producing **only flawed** fruit. However, the believer is only dominated by the sinful nature **by choice**.



The lower wandering line represents the "abnormal" Christian life. If not personally discipled and instructed as to **how to follow the Holy Spirit**, most believers find themselves modeling their behavior after other believers, rather than following the leading of the Holy Spirit. The typical result is that the believer will at some specific time ignore or discount the leading of the Holy Spirit, choosing rather to follow the example of peers.

As a result of spiritual ignorance, or by willful disobedience, the believer who is unwilling to allow the Holy Spirit to manage his life finds himself in a "desert" experience – never quite being able to gain victory over the pull of the sinful nature. This believer forfeits God's intended fruitful Christian life.

These believers typically see God as their "**Junior Partner**", rather than their Master. They conclude that "He is always there when they can't cope and **they determine** He is needed to deliver them out of circumstances". They typically consider their own goals and aspirations to be of greater importance than those of God. They desire for God to fit into **their** plans, rather than fitting into **His** plan. Their lives are characterized by a "**disposition of self-dependence**".

Note that the Holy Spirit (represented by the dotted line just above the wavy line) is constantly wooing the believer to choose Christ as Lord. The Holy Spirit is not the dominant force in this believer's life. As a consequence He doesn't have the freedom to produce **His** fruit through the believer as He would like to.

The solid line at the bottom represents the dominance of the sinful human nature. This believer relies on his own understanding to make decisions. By not allowing the Holy Spirit to rule in his life, the human nature is allowed to rule. Submission to the human nature will cause problems for the believer, and hopefully he will become so dissatisfied and frustrated (usually through a crisis) that he will finally make a decision to acknowledge Christ's Lordship over his life.

These believers are described in the parable of *The Sower* (Matthew 13 & Luke 8) as being **distracted, not maturing**, resulting in **not bearing eternal rewardable fruit**, until they choose to acknowledge His authority over their life, and begin to "abide". Although saved, they can potentially lose all rewards. *If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.* (1 Cor. 3:15)

To believers that have habitually lived in a desert experience, often for years, the thought of consistently abiding in fellowship with the Holy Spirit seems unrealistic and "super spiritual". Such a biblical relationship with the Lord is often perceived as idealistic and beyond the attainment of the average believer. The simple truth is that it is not a matter of attaining to, but rather by faith taking advantage of what God has already made provision for.

If a believer simply understands the need to let the Lord manage his life (Lordship) and learns how to consistently abide, he will experience God's designed normal Christian life. It's not something you "attain to", it is yours through spiritual birth. **Every Christian has a right to live in the spiritual Promised Land.**

For many believers this desert experience could have been avoided, or significantly shortened, had they been personally mentored ("spiritually parented", "personally discipled") when they first believed in Christ.

5



The short parallel lines, located at the fork in the believer's life, represent the "spiritual Jordan river" and the believer's choice to acknowledge His Lordship and enter the "spiritual Promised Land". This indicates the "**event**" in the believer's life to "**choose**" to let the Holy Spirit control and manage his life.

This is not a decision to "try my best", or to "behave better in my own strength", but rather a decision to **surrender my "will"**, **accept His yoke**, and **allow Him to live His life through me**.

(Jesus said) "*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. **Take My yoke** upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*" (Mat. 11:28-30)

(Paul wrote) "*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is **no longer I who live**, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*" (Gal. 2:20)

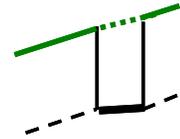
6



Once the believer makes the Lordship decision, then the normal Christian life is one of consistently "abiding in fellowship" with the Holy Spirit.

The solid line at the top represents the time in which the believer is in fellowship with the Holy Spirit ("walking in the Spirit"). The presence of the sinful nature in the spiritual believer is represented by a dashed line.

7



Notice that there are breaks in the line, which represent periods of time during which the believer is out of fellowship (not abiding) with the Holy Spirit.

The third dip depicts the example of King David. When King David climbed up to the roof of his house he may or may not have been in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. When he chose to commit adultery and murder, he was clearly out of fellowship. He remained out of fellowship with the Lord for approximately a nine-month period. Fellowship was not restored until just before the baby was born, when David was confronted by the prophet Nathan. As soon as David confessed his sin to the Lord he was immediately restored, even for murder and adultery. Yes, he suffered consequences through the rest of his life, but as far as God's forgiveness was concerned, he was **immediately** forgiven and restored into fellowship. Being restored into fellowship does not mean that there are no consequences, but it does mean that there is **complete** forgiveness.

As shown above, the acceptance of Christ's Lordship over one's life is no guarantee of continual unbroken spiritual fellowship. Abiding fellowship is **conditional**. At any time the believer may allow his fellowship with the Holy Spirit to be disrupted, and find himself "walking in the flesh" (submitted to the sinful nature). At any given moment we are either submitted to the Holy Spirit or we are submitted to the sinful nature. We are either "walking in the Spirit" or "walking in the flesh".

God has made provision for every believer to consistently "walk in the Spirit" (the "normal" Christian life). A believer may excuse sin using the pretext of "that's just the way I am", or cite verses from Romans 7, where Paul describes his struggle with the sinful nature. It should be noted however that Paul's spiritual life was better characterized by Romans 8. Certainly every believer will be out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit at times, but such periods should be

the exception, not the rule. And those times of being out of fellowship (walking in the flesh, dominated by the sinful nature) should diminish in both frequency and duration as the believer matures.

The Holy Spirit **will** produce His fruit as we abide. Our part is **not to strive** to produce fruit. Or worry about it. Our part is to **abide in fellowship** with Him, and the fruit will come **naturally**. The Holy Spirit will only produce **good** fruit. I should not assume that everything I do while I am abiding is pleasing to God. He will only hold me accountable according to my maturity level, just as loving parents train their children. *For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.* (Heb. 12:10)

During periods when we are out of fellowship (when we're not abiding) the Holy Spirit is not free to produce His fruit through our lives. *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits **nothing**; ...* (John 6:63)

⑧ God wants to reward every believer. He is preparing eternal rewards that cannot be compared with the things of this world. Jesus commanded us to lay up treasure for ourselves in heaven, not here on earth. The treasures in heaven are so wonderful, they will make everything in this world that we're familiar with pale in comparison. Each believer has to decide if he wants to lay up **eternal** treasures in heaven or **temporary** treasures here on earth. Jesus said: *"But **store up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, ... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* (Matt. 6:20-21)

1 Cor. 3:10-15 speaks of potential "loss" at the Rewards Ceremony for believers. It is important to distinguish between "loss" and "punishment". **Loss is not punishment**. Consider a graduation ceremony as an example. You may go to a graduation where you receive a diploma. Others may receive accolades and awards in

additional to their diploma. Because you only received a diploma it would not be correct to view yourself as being "punished". Those who have received special awards were honored because of their priority decisions. You could also have received special awards had you not chosen to forfeit them in favor of other priorities that you considered to be more important.

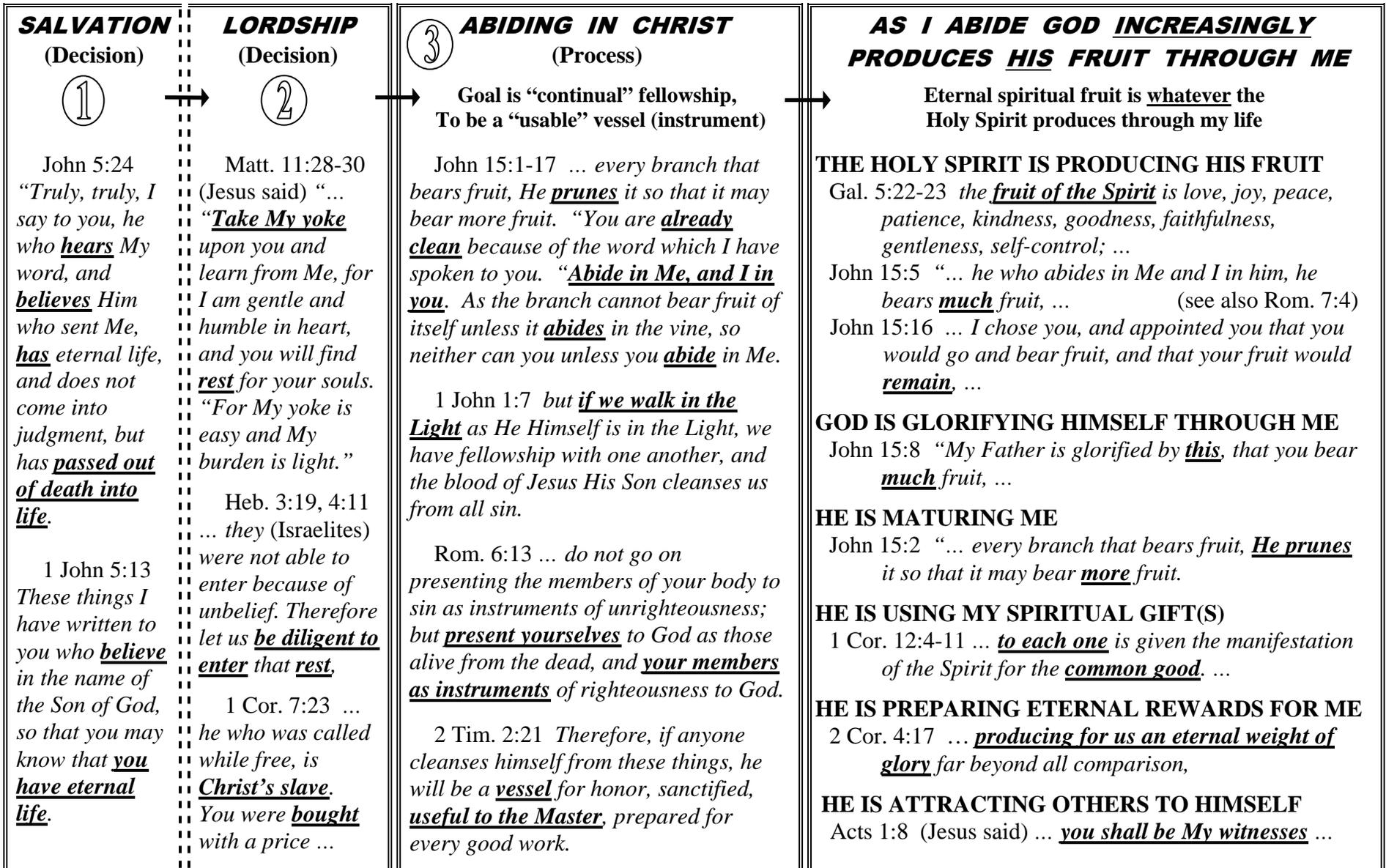
The believer who is walking in the flesh can do "good" things (from the human perspective), just as an unbeliever can. Anything, however small, that is motivated by the Holy Spirit is **eternal** and **rewardable**. Anything, regardless of outward appearance, that is not motivated by the Holy Spirit is **flawed**, less than perfect, and of **no** eternal or rewardable value. Paul warns us: *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am **nothing**. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, **it profits me nothing**.* (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

Only that which is produced by the Holy Spirit is perfect and can enter into eternity. Only the Holy Spirit can produce perfect fruit. It is not what I do "for" God that is important, but rather what I allow the Holy Spirit to produce through me. (Eccl. 3:14)

The issue is not one of fruit or no fruit that we have to be concerned about. What we need to be concerned about is **where does the fruit originate**. As we abide, the Holy Spirit **will** bear **His** fruit through our life. It's as simple as that!

(Jesus said) "I am the vine, you are the branches; **he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.** (John 15:5)

THE 3 MAJOR PHASES OF THE NORMAL HEALTHY CHRISTIAN LIFE



The following true story about “Vera”, illustrates the 3 Major Phases of the Christian life

- 1) Even though a Lordship decision should be made at conversion, sometimes it is not made until years later.
- 2) A true surrender of the will is followed by changes in behavior.

(This testimony is segmented to better demonstrate the major phases of the Christian life.)

<p>① SALVATION (Decision)</p> <p>CHRIST AS “SAVIOR”</p> <p><i>Vera recalls her <u>conversion</u> in a little church in Kansas: "When the invitation to receive Christ as Savior was given, I knew I should go forward.</i></p> <p><i>But my feet seemed glued to the floor. Finally on the last verse of 'Almost Persuaded,' I went and made my confession of faith."</i></p> <p><i>This new believer should have been personally disciplined at this critical time, which probably would have averted the following years of desert experience.</i></p>	<p>DESERT EXPERIENCE</p> <p><i>After <u>graduating</u> from high school, Vera <u>taught</u> in an elementary school. Her teaching career ended when she <u>married</u>.</i></p>	<p>② LORDSHIP (Decision)</p> <p>CHRIST AS “LORD” <i>(After some years of wandering)</i></p> <p><i>"I had been married <u>several</u> years when the Lord got my attention," Vera relates.</i></p> <p><i>"At home one day, I came under deep conviction, and knew I had to ask Jesus to be the <u>Lord</u> of my life."</i></p>	<p>③ ABIDING IN CHRIST (Process)</p> <p>CHANGED BEHAVIOR BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT’S TRANSFORMING POWER</p> <p><i>“<u>Changes</u> came that I can't explain, except that I know it was <u>the Lord's work</u> in me.”</i></p> <p><i>Vera <u>contacted</u> people she felt she might have wronged and <u>apologized</u> to them. She developed a <u>hunger</u> for Bible study. "As a child I'd learned John 3:16 and Psalm 23, but I hadn't been interested in learning anything else," she confesses. "Now I <u>wanted to learn</u> everything."</i></p> <p><i>To further her <u>search</u> for understanding of God's Word, she tuned in to Gospel programs on her radio. And she began to make <u>prayer</u> a part of her daily routine.</i></p> <p><i><u>Through the years</u>, as she helped with farming and raising their son, Vera continued to <u>study the Bible</u> and <u>maintain her prayer regimen</u>. When Vera and her husband decided to retire, they moved and joined a Bible-teaching church, where Vera was soon recognized for her Bible knowledge and her <u>faithfulness</u> in prayer.</i></p> <p><i>She didn't plan it, nor is her intercession organized, yet through telephone or personal visits she has <u>encouraged many lives</u>. Seekers have been <u>counseled</u> as Vera <u>shares spiritual truths</u> from a <u>lifetime relationship</u> with the Lord.</i></p>
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The source of this story is unknown.

HARDSHIPS, SUFFERING & GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Jesus clearly tells me that I cannot be His disciple unless I make the commitment to follow Him. (See Matt. 10:38, Matt. 16:24, Luke 14:27, John 12:26) Quite regularly, as I follow Him, He will cause me to encounter circumstances that I will perceive as unpleasant and often beyond my human ability to cope. The purpose of this lesson is to help me understand the process in which **every** circumstance, even those that appear insignificant, whether good or bad, pass through God's permissive will. He uses **every** circumstance in His process of transforming me into a holy and useful vessel, through which He can accomplish His eternal purposes.

A Christian who does not understand the significance of God's sovereign control over **all** circumstances will typically respond with complaining, blaming, self-pity, anger or bitterness. It pleases God when I choose to cooperate with Him by acknowledging to Him my acceptance of what He has designed for me, and seek His direction for the appropriate and godly response, as well as for any lessons He may want me to learn.

- 1. Is God in absolute control over all that happens in the universe and on earth? Does there exist some person or force that can somehow affect God's sovereign power? Does He always do what is right? Can God do wrong? Can He make mistakes? Is He totally trustworthy?**

Deut 32:4 *"The Rock! His work is **perfect**, for **all** His ways are **just**; a God of **faithfulness** and **without injustice, righteous** and **upright** is He.*

Psa 18:30 *As for God, His way is **blameless**; the word of the Lord is **tried**; ...*

Prov 21:30 *There is **no** wisdom, **no** insight, **no** plan that can succeed against the LORD.*

Job 34:12-16 *"Surely, God **will not act wickedly**, and the Almighty **will not pervert justice**. ...*

Isa 46:11 *... Truly **I** have spoken; truly **I will** bring it to pass. **I** have planned it, surely **I will** do it.*

Dan 4:35 *"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted **as nothing**, but He does according to **His** will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and **no one** can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'*

- 2. Is God in absolute control over all the circumstances and details of my life? (Read and contemplate Psalm 139 together.)**

Acts 17:25 *... He Himself gives to all people **life** and **breath** and **all things**;*

Job 34:14-15 *"If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, **all flesh would perish together**, and **man would return to dust**.*

Jer. 1:5 *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, ...*

Jer. 10:23 *I know, O Lord, that a man's way is **not in himself**, **nor** is it in a man who walks **to direct his steps**.*

Prov 16:9 *The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord **directs** his steps.*

Prov 19:21 *Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord **will stand**.*

Jer. 29:11 *'For I know the **plans** that I have for **you**,' declares the Lord, 'plans for **welfare** and not for calamity to give you a **future** and a **hope**.*

Matt 6:25-27,34 *“For this reason I say to you, **do not be worried** about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? “Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. **Are you not worth much more** than they? “And **who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?** ... “**So do not worry** about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Rom. 8:28 *And we know that God causes **all** things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

1 Cor. 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is **faithful**, who **will not allow** you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the **way of escape** also, so that you will be able to endure it.*

- 3. God tells me in His Word that I should consider hardships and suffering to be a “normal” part of my Christian experience here on earth. Hardships and suffering should not be assumed to be an indication of God’s displeasure. Nor can I assume that His blessings always imply my faithfulness. He is a loving God, and He takes care of His children even when they are displeasing.**

Note: Let us define “difficulties” as “**anything that I personally find unpleasant**”. We all find physical suffering to be undesirable, however, because of our diverse personalities, we can have very differing reactions to most circumstances. (One person may watch or participate in a sport, or other activity, and find it exhilarating, while another would view it as a totally unpleasant experience.)

- a. Here are two examples of believers who were suffering poverty from the world’s perspective, but they were rich before God. They were not being punished, but were temporarily poor so God could make them eternally rich.**

Luke 16:19-31 *“Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. “And **a poor man named Lazarus** was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. “Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. “In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. ... Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. ...*

Mark 12:41-44 *And He (Jesus) sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. A **poor widow** came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, **out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.**”*

b. The apostle Paul did not view hardships as something unusual. In fact, the following long list of hardships are things that transpired while Paul was in the center of God's will, seeking to please Him as His servant.

Acts 9:15-16 (God said of Paul) ... he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

2 Cor. 6:4-10 (Paul wrote) ... as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

2 Cor. 11:23-27 ... in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from ivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Phil. 3:7-11 ... I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish

Phil. 4:11-13 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Acts 16:22-40 The crowd rose up together against them (Paul & Silas), and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he ... threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; ...

c. Neither did the other apostles find hardships and suffering to be unusual.

Acts 5:40-41 ... they (Jewish leaders) flogged them (the apostles) and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

1 Cor. 4:9-13 *For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men **condemned to death**; because we have become **a spectacle** to the world, both to angels and to men. We are **fools** for Christ's sake, ... ; we are **weak**, ... we are **without honor**. To this present hour we are both **hungry** and **thirsty**, and are **poorly clothed**, and are **roughly treated**, and are **homeless**; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are **reviled**, we bless; when we are **persecuted**, we endure; when we are **slandered**, we try to conciliate; we have become as **the scum of the world**, the **dregs of all things**, even until now.*

Rev 1:9 *I, John, your ... fellow partaker in the **tribulation** and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*

d. Neither should I find it unusual when I encounter hardships and suffering.

John 15:18-21 (Jesus said) ... *I chose you out of the world, because of this the **world hates you**. "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, **they will also persecute you**; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. "But **all these things they will do to you** for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.*

John 16:33 *"These things I have spoken to you, so that **in Me you may have peace**. In the world you have **tribulation**, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*

Acts 14:22 ... *"Through **many tribulations** we must enter the kingdom of God."*

Phil. 1:29 *For **to you it has been granted** for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also **to suffer** for His sake,*

1 Thess. 3:2-4 (Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers) ... *we sent Timothy, ... to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these **afflictions**; for you yourselves know that we have been **destined for this**. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to **suffer affliction**; ...*

2 Tim. 1:8 ... *join with me **in suffering** for the gospel according to the power of God,*

2 Tim. 3:12 *Indeed, **all** who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus **will be persecuted**.*

1 Peter 2:20-21 ... *if when you do what is right and **suffer** for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been **called for this purpose**, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an **example** for you **to follow** in His steps, (see also 1 Peter 3:13-17)*

1 Peter 4:12-16 *Beloved, **do not be surprised** at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, **as though some strange thing were happening to you**; but to the degree that you **share** the sufferings of Christ, **keep on rejoicing**, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are **reviled** for the name of Christ, you are **blessed**, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ...but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is **not to be ashamed**, but is to **glorify God** in this name.*

1 Peter 5:10 ***After** you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself **perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you**.*

Rom. 8:35-39 *Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will **tribulation**, or **distress**, or **persecution**, or **famine**, or **nakedness**, or **peril**, or **sword**? ... But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.*

4. GOD TYPICALLY ALLOWS SUFFERING FOR ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- To build character into my life
- As a result of my own disobedience, neglect or carelessness.
- To teach me
- To help me understand the needs of others
- To use my life to be a blessing to others

a. **God uses suffering and hardships to build character into my life and to shape me into a usable and holy vessel in His hands. He alone knows what influences and circumstances will best enable Him to bless me and use me for the purposes that He has designed for my remaining time here on earth.**

Rom. 5:3-4 ... we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

James 1:2-4 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect (mature) and complete, lacking in nothing.

Heb. 5:8-9 (speaking of Jesus) Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. ...

1 Peter 4:12-16 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ...

b. **Some suffering is brought about as a result of my own disobedience, neglect or carelessness. Even then, God is faithful and loving and will use my situation as a teaching experience for me. For example, if I am careless with my diet, I may as a result experience physical discomfort or suffering.**

1 Cor. 11:27-34 (Paul wrote) ... whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. ... For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep (died). But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment....

Heb 12:6-11 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ... we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- c. Sometimes God allows me to suffer in order to demonstrate His faithfulness, power, and sufficiency, and at the same time to help me to recognize my personal weaknesses. (A deliverance, of necessity, requires something to be delivered “from”)**

2 Cor. 1:8-9 (Paul wrote) ... *our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;*

2 Cor. 12:7-10 ... *there was given me (Paul) a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me —to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

- d. Sometimes God uses suffering to help me identify with the suffering of others in order to be able with sincere compassion to be helpful to them.**

2 Cor. 1:3-5 (Paul wrote) ... *God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.*

Heb. 2:10,17-18 *For it was fitting for Him (God the Father), ... to perfect the author (Jesus) of their salvation through sufferings. ... 17-18 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, ... For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*

1 Peter 5:9-10 (Peter wrote) *But resist him (the devil), firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, ... will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.*

- e. Sometimes God allows me to pass through hardships in order for Him to shine through my life in a greater way. (A light is most visible and significant in the darkness.)**

Matt. 5:14-16 (Jesus said) “*You are the light of the world. ... “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

John 9:1-3 *As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*

Acts 16:22-34 *The crowd rose up together against them (Paul & Silas), and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be **beaten with rods**. When they had struck them with many blows, they **threw them into prison**, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and **fastened their feet in the stocks**. But about midnight Paul and Silas were **praying** and **singing hymns of praise** to God, and the **prisoners were listening** to them; and suddenly there came a great **earthquake**, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, **what must I do to be saved?**" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord **to him together with all who were in his house**. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, **he and all his household**. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and **rejoiced** greatly, **having believed** in God with **his whole household**.*

5. Following God will sometimes require a release of things I hold dear, in order for Him to replace them with what is **better and will have eternal benefits for me and others (e.g. comfort, material belongings, health, etc.).**

Matthew 5:11-12 (Jesus said) "*Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. "**Rejoice** and **be glad**, for **your reward in heaven** is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Luke 21:1-4 *And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a **poor widow** putting in two small copper coins. And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in **all that she had to live on**."*

Acts 4:32-35 *And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and **not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own**, but all things were common property to them. ... all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.*

Rom. 8:17-18 (Paul wrote) ... *if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are **not worthy to be compared** with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

Heb. 11:17-19 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, **offered up Isaac**, ...*

Heb. 11:24-27 *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, **choosing rather to endure ill-treatment** with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the **reproach of Christ** greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was **looking to the reward**. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he **endured**, as seeing Him who is unseen.*

1 Peter 1:6-7 *In this you greatly rejoice, even though **now for a little while**, if necessary, you have been distressed by various **trials**, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though **tested by fire**, may be found **to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**;*

6. My responses to His designed circumstances are an indicator of my willingness to accept what He has planned for me and to entrust myself into His care.

a. Jesus shows me by example what my attitude and response should be.

Matt. 26:51-53 *... one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; ... "Or **do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?**"*

John 19:9-11 *... (Pilate) said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" Jesus answered, "**You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above**; ..."*

Heb 5:8 *Although He was a Son, He **learned obedience** from the things which He suffered.*

Heb 12:2 ***fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him **endured** the cross, **despising the shame**, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

1 Peter 2:19-23 *For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person **bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly**. ... if when you do what is right and suffer for it you **patiently endure** it, this finds favor with God. For you have been **called** for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an **example** for you **to follow** in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, **He did not revile in return**; while suffering, **He uttered no threats**, but **kept entrusting Himself to Him** who judges righteously;*

b. The apostle Paul chose to entrust himself into God's loving care.

Acts 20:22-24 *"... bound in spirit, I (Paul) am on my way to Jerusalem, **not knowing** what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that **bonds and afflictions await me**. "But **I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself**, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, ..."*

2 Cor. 12:7-10 ... He (God) has said to me (Paul), “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather **boast about my weaknesses**, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am **well content** with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Phil 3:10 that I (Paul) may **know Him** and the power of His resurrection and the **fellowship of His sufferings**, being **conformed to His death**;

Phil 4:12 I (Paul) know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; **in any and every circumstance** I have learned **the secret** of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

c. Job had learned that he could entrust himself into God’s sovereign care. In one day God allowed Satan to take away almost all Job possessed, including his children (Job 1:4-19). Then God allowed Satan to severely afflict Job’s physical health (Job 2:1-8). Yet Job’s response pleased God.

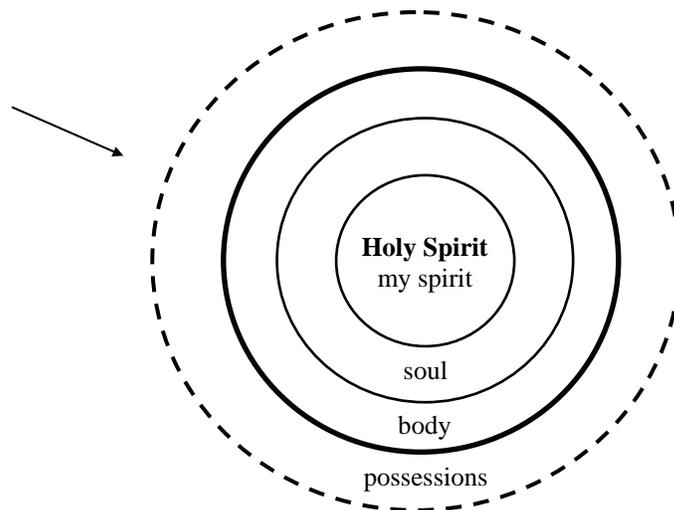
Job 1:1-3 ... a man ... whose name was **Job** ... was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

Job 1:20-22 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and **worshiped**. He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. **Blessed** be the name of the Lord.” **Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.**

Job 2:7,8,10 ... Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. ... Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” **In all this Job did not sin with his lips.**

God’s
“**hedge**” of
sovereignty

Job 1:9-10 Then Satan answered the Lord, “Does Job fear God for nothing? “Have You not made a **hedge about him** and **his house** and **all that he has**, **on every side**? ...



- d. Let us look at Joseph's response to the hardships that God allowed - His jealous brothers hated him and sold him to foreign traders, who took him to Egypt (Gen. 37:2-36). Then he was falsely accused of attempted rape, and innocently suffered in prison (Gen. 39:1-40:23 and Psa. 105:17-19).

Joseph spoke of God's faithfulness and sovereignty to his brothers.

Gen. 41:52 ... he said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction".
45:5 "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.
45:8 "Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; ...
50:19-20 ... Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

CONCLUSION: God is worthy of my trust. I can always count on Him to do what is in my best interest. When I stand before Him in heaven, and understand what He was doing in my life here on earth, I will have no regrets for the times when I trusted Him fully. He does not desire for me to look at hardships with solemn resignation, neither to pursue suffering for its own sake, but rather with childlike faith to accept what comes from a Father who loves me beyond human understanding. Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (1 Peter 4:19)

Psalms 33:18-21 ... the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness, to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy name.

Psalms 34:4-8 I (David) sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. ... This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Rom. 8:31-32 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

1 John 5:18-19 We know [absolutely] that anyone born of God does not [deliberately and knowingly] practice committing sin, but the One Who was begotten of God carefully watches over and protects him [Christ's divine presence within him preserves him against the evil], and the wicked one does not lay hold (get a grip) on him or touch [him]. We know [positively] that we are of God, and the whole world [around us] is under the power of the evil one. (Amplified New Testament)

1 Thess. 5:16-18 Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

7. [Our Daily Bread](#) – (March 21, 2005)

A Bumpy Road

When people tell me life is hard, I always reply, "Of course it is." I find that answer more satisfying than anything else I can say. Writer Charles Williams said, "The world is painful in any case; but it is quite unbearable if anybody gives us the idea that we are meant to be liking it."

The path by which God takes us often seems to lead away from what we perceive as our good, causing us to believe we've missed a turn and taken the wrong road. That's because most of us have been taught to believe that if we're on the right track God's goodness will always translate into a life free of trouble.

But that's a pipe dream far removed from the biblical perspective. God's love often leads us down roads where earthly comforts fail us. Paul said, "To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29). When we come to the end of all our dark valleys, we'll understand that every circumstance has been allowed for our ultimate good.

"No other route would have been as safe and as certain as the one by which we came," Bible teacher F. B. Meyer said. "If only we could see the path as God has always seen it, we would have selected it as well." —David Roper

*If some darker lot be good,
Lord, teach us to endure
The sorrow, pain, or solitude
That makes the spirit pure. —Irons*

No trial would cause us to despair if we knew God's reason for allowing it.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Go to <http://www.rbc.org/rtb/4rsn/>

["10 Reasons To Believe In A God Who Allows Suffering"](#)

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"MAKING RIGHT CHOICES, DISCERNING GOD'S WILL"

"GOD WILL ALWAYS GIVE THE VERY BEST TO THOSE WHO LEAVE THE CHOICE WITH HIM"

1. GOD'S GOALS FOR MY LIFE SERVE AS FOUNDATIONAL GUIDELINES:

- a. God's desire for me is to love Him (demonstrated by my willingness to trust in His character), to grow in my understanding of how to please Him, and to allow the Holy Spirit to transform me into His likeness.
- b. God loves every person in the world and He has a plan to reach unbelievers with the good news of salvation and to bring believers to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness in Christ.
- c. God wants me to be willing to let Him use me in His plan, resulting in my being blessed both here on earth as well as eternally in heaven.

2. PREREQUISITES FOR UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WILL.

a. I need to believe that God has His tailor made plan for my life.

Psalm 139:16 *Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.*

Proverbs 16:9 *The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.*

Proverbs 20:24 *Man's steps are ordained by the Lord, how then can man understand his way?*

Jeremiah 10:23 *... a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.*

Acts 13:36 *...David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, (died) ...*

b. God wants me to know His will for me, He doesn't want to hide it from me. He may not give me as much evidence as I want, but He gives me enough to intelligently follow Him by faith.

Romans 12:1-2 *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Ephesians 5:17 *So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

Colossians 1:9-10 *... since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

c. God is sovereign and perfectly able to carry out His will.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 *I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him.*
Proverbs 19:21 *Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand.*
Isaiah 46:9-10 *... I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure';*
Daniel 4:35 *"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'*
Acts 17:25 *nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;*

d. I must honestly want to know His will, and prayerfully seek it.

Jeremiah 29:13 *'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.*
Proverbs 2:1-6 *My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*
James 1:5-8 *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

e. Choices that have eternal rewards (that is, motivated by the Holy Spirit) always require a measure of faith, and include a perception of risk. Someone has said, don't ask if something is possible, but rather ask, "is it God's will?", because if it God's will, He will make it possible.

2 Cor. 4:16-18 *... we do not lose heart, ... For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*
Gal. 3:11 *... "The righteous man shall live by faith."*
Heb. 11:6 *... without faith it is impossible to please Him, ...*
1 Peter 1:6-7 *... now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

f. Choices based on faith may result in sacrifice and/or suffering. There is a price for obedience to His will. Trials ought not to be viewed as an enemy.

Luke 21:1-4 *And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."*

Heb. 5:8 *Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.*

James 1:2-4 *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

g. I need to choose to humble myself before God with a submissive attitude, "allowing" Him to teach me and change my priorities, as He deems best.

Psalms 25:9 *He leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way.*

Psalms 32:8-9 *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you.*

Acts 13:22 *... He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.'*

3. FOUR FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN MAKING RIGHT CHOICES:

a. THE WORD OF GOD: Does the Bible say something specific about the matter, or present principles related to it?

Psalms 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

1 Thess. 5:16-18 *Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

1 Thess. 4:3-5 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;*

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

b. THE PEACE OF GOD: Do I have God's peace?

Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*
Colossians 3:15 *Let the peace of Christ rule (that is: “act as an umpire”) in your hearts, ... and be thankful.*
Philippians 4:6-7 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

<<<CAUTION>>> "Feelings" and "desires" may be deceptive. My natural tendency is not to follow His direction, but rather to be independent. Be honest with yourself! It is often helpful to ask yourself (and God), “Would this be pleasing to God?”.

Proverbs 16:2 *All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives.*
Proverbs 28:26 *He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered.*
Jeremiah 17:9 *“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”*
Galatians 5:17 *For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.*

<<<CAUTION>>> I need to confess any known sin.

Psalms 66:18 *If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear;*
Proverbs 28:9 *He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination.*
Proverbs 28:13 *He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.*
James 4:3 *You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*
1 John 1:5-10 *This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

c. CIRCUMSTANCES: There is really only "One Circumstance" and that is God. Are circumstances suitable? Are doors opening? Or closing? Finances? (Caution: If not used carefully, credit cards (and/or credit) can be a hindrance to God's freedom to use finances as an instrument to guide me.)

<<<CAUTION>>> Are the obstacles (problems) a "Trial" or "Direction"? The path of least resistance may not be God's will. Difficulties or suffering do not necessarily prove that I am not in the center of God's will any more than material and comfort blessings prove that I am in the center of His will.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (Paul) ... *we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;*

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 (Paul, in the center of God's will) *Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ...*

d. SPIRITUAL COUNSEL: I should seek godly and wise counsel. (My spouse may also "balance" me.)

Proverbs 1:5 *A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.*

Proverbs 12:15 *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.*

Proverbs 15:22 *Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed.*

Proverbs 19:20 *Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days.*

<<<CAUTION>>> Counsel can be wrong.

Job 2:9 *Then his wife said to him (Job), "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"*

Job 42:7 *... the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.*

See also: 1 Kings 13:1-26

4. TWO DIFFERENT METHODS FOR MAKING CHOICES:

- a. **“Active” - Unless otherwise directed I cautiously move ahead in what honestly appears to be the best direction, consciously trusting God to confirm or to restrain, by either opening or shutting doors. (You can't steer a parked car, or a boat that's tied to the dock.) Note: This is usually the way we seek a spouse or a job, buy a house or a car; that is, things we want.**

Psalm 37:23-24 *The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand.*

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*

Isaiah 30:21 *Your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left.*

Acts 16:6-10 *They (Paul and team) passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

- b. **“Passive” - I “wait” for God to do something special. Too often this is the way Christians seek to know God's will, especially regarding things they may not desire. This may seem like an easier way to make choices, but it is not always practical or consistent with the way we usually make choices. Sometimes this is the only thing we can do.**

Exodus 14:14 *“The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.”*

Psalm 27:14 *Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord.*

Psalm 37:7 *Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; ...*

5. A COUPLE OF BASIC QUESTIONS TO ASK MYSELF:

- *If I could choose one course for my life would it be one of my selection or one of God's selection?*
- *Do I prefer to know God's plan and purpose for my daily life while I'm still here on earth and am able to act upon it, or would I rather wait until I stand before Christ at the judgment of believers? (2 Cor. 5:10) It seems reasonable that each of us is going to become aware of His purpose and plan for our life, either here on earth -- or there.*

MAKING RIGHT CHOICES - DISCERNING GOD'S WILL

(Read from bottom to top)

CRITERIA

4. Counsel Of Spiritual Christians.
3. Circumstances.
2. The Peace Of God.
1. The Word Of God.

A SURRENDERED ATTITUDE

4. A Willingness To Exercise Faith.
3. An Openness To Be Changed By Him.
2. To Be Prayerfully Seeking His Will For Me.
1. A Desire To Allow God To Fulfill His Will In My Life.

PREREQUISITES

2. I Need To Believe That God Is Sovereign And Perfectly Able To Carry Out His Purpose And Plan For My Life.
1. I Need To Believe That God Has A Personal And Individualized Plan And Purpose For My Life.

GOD'S GOALS

3. God's Desire Is To Bless And To Use Me In His Purposes, Resulting In Me Being Blessed Both Here On Earth As Well As Eternally In Heaven.
2. God Loves Every Person In The World And He Wants To Use Me In His Plan To Reach Unbelievers With The Good News Of Salvation And To Bring Believers To Maturity In Christ.
1. God's Desire For Me Is To Love Him (Demonstrated By Surrender And Obedience To Him), To Be Growing In My Understanding Of How To Please Him, And To Be Letting The Holy Spirit Transform Me Into His Likeness.

CHRISTIAN MATURITY

A Christian's level of spiritual maturity is the degree to which God's perspective of life has become the Christian's perspective.

1. What does Growth in Spiritual Maturity refer to?

Growing in Spiritual Maturity refers to the process in which the Holy Spirit transforms a Christian's spiritual understanding (values, priorities) in order to increase the flow of His life (His Living Water) through that Christian. As more of His life is free to flow through me there will be an ever-increasing measure of His spiritual fruit in my life.

ABIDING FELLOWSHIP with the Holy Spirit has to do with whether or not His life is able to flow through me at any given moment. (# 3 position on Lesson 3-8)

SPIRITUAL MATURITY has to do with how much of His life is able to flow through me at any given moment (in the context of abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit).

2. Spiritual Maturity does not necessarily speak of how much Biblical knowledge I possess, but rather of how willing I have been to allow the Holy Spirit to transform my understanding of Him, and of life.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 *Thus says the Lord, "... let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, ..."*

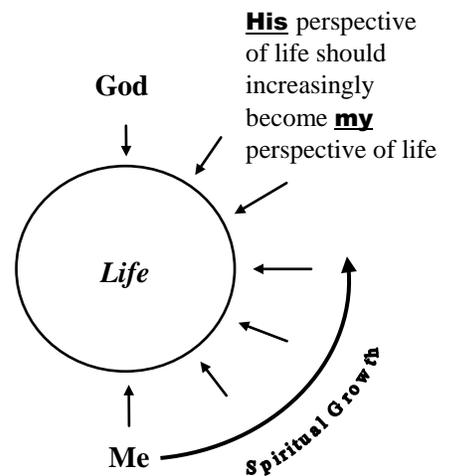
John 17:3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, ...

Rom. 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

2 Peter 1:5-8 *Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Col. 1:10 *...that you will walk ... bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

2 Peter 3:17-18 *You therefore, beloved, ... be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ...*



3. I can limit the flow of His life through me by focusing on my perceived personal capabilities or limitations.

My natural tendency is to limit God according to my personal understanding of Him and how He acts. As He trains me He will speak to me about different areas of my understanding that are restricting the free flow of His life in and through me. I need to continually maintain the attitude of a disciple (an apprentice learner), a child (eager to listen and believe), so as to minimize the time that the Holy Spirit has to expend teaching me in any given area of understanding. I need to consciously allow Him access to any area of my life, aware that He will never make any changes except what is in my eternal best interest.

Look at how we limit the Lord by only remembering what we have allowed Him to do for us in the past. We say, "I always failed there, and I always will." Consequently, we don't ask for what we want. Instead, we think, "It is ridiculous to ask God to do this." If it is an impossibility, it is the very thing for which we have to ask. (Taken from My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers – Feb. 29 (c) 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed (c) 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd., and is used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Box 3566, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.)

As I grow spiritually, my focus will shift from my capabilities to His capabilities.

CAUTION: It is an unyielding “strength to resist” that hinders God, not weakness.

2 Cor. 12:9-10 (Jesus told Paul) *“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ... for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

To honestly recognize my own capabilities is okay, but to limit God’s power to my perceived personal capabilities is an insult to Him.

4. Spiritual growth (learning process) should continue until I move on to heaven.

A trap that awaits the growing Christian is the illusion that he will somehow arrive at a spiritual plateau after which spiritual growth will continue with minimal discomfort. God wants to exercise my faith and increase my understanding of how He thinks and acts, in order for me to increasingly think **like Him**, and to bear more eternal fruit. Even though every step of faith involves a “perceived” risk, I can rest in the assurance that I am **never** out of God’s sovereign oversight and care, and He will **never** allow me to suffer beyond His sufficient provision of grace to sustain me. The process will continue until I leave this earth and step into God’s presence. Growing believers find that their life is a constant warfare. There are no plateaus, just “rest stops”. Be aware of a tendency to be complacent and satisfied with your level of spiritual growth. We resist change.

Romans 5:3-5 ... *we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

1 Cor. 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*

James 1:3-4 *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect (mature) and complete, lacking in nothing.*

5. Biblical illustrations of the maturing process:

a. **Rivers of Living Water:** A trickle becomes a stream, which becomes a river.

John 7:38-39 (Jesus said) “*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke of the Spirit, ...* (See also John 4:14)

As I live in abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit His “Living Water” is free to flow through my life. The volume of His Living Water that is able to flow depends on my spiritual maturity.

b. **A Branch on a Vine:** A twig becomes a branch. Obviously, as the branch grows (matures), more fruit can be produced through it.

John 15:1-2, 8, 16 (Jesus said) “*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ... every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.*

“*My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.*

“*You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, ...*

Romans 7:4 (Paul wrote) ... *you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.*

c. **The Growth / Maturing Process:** An infant (baby, child) becomes an adolescent, who becomes an adult.

Characteristics of an infant / baby: (1) hungry, (2) dependent on others, (3) self-centered.

Stages of growth: The immature Christian tends to focus on self needs, then as he grows the needs of others become the focus, and as he matures God Himself becomes the main focus.

Psalms 73:25 *Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.*

➤ **Infants / Babies / Children:**

1 Cor. 3:1-3 *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. ...*

1 Cor. 13:11 (Paul writes) *When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; ...*

1 Cor. 14:20 *Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.*

1 Thess. 2:7 *But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.*

Heb. 5:12-14 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.*

1 Peter 2:2 *like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,*

1 John 2:12-13 *I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name’s sake. ... I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.*

➤ **Young Adults:**

1 John 2:13-14 (John writes) ... *I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

➤ **Adults (fathers):**

1 Cor. 13:11 (Paul writes) ... *when I became a man, I did away with childish things.*
1 Cor. 14:20 *Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.*
Hebrews 5:14 *But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*
1 John 2:13-14 (John writes) *I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. ...*

➤ **All Believers (the Church):**

Col. 1:28-29 *We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete (mature) in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, ...*
Eph. 4:11-15 *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,*
Rom. 8:29 *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, ...*

d. The Spiritual Growth of Jesus.

(**Note:** His spiritual growth had nothing to do with sin. He was never disobedient or less than perfect.)

Luke 2:40 *The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.*
Luke 2:42, 46-52 *And when He became twelve, ... they (Joseph and Mary) found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. ... And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*
Heb. 2:10 *For it was fitting for Him, ... to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.*
Heb. 5:8-9 *Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,*